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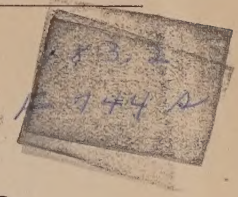

# Socrates

By
Rev. J. T. Forbes, M.A.

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1905

TO

MY WIFE

# PREFACE

Among works dealing specially with the subject of this Manual the most serviceable to me have been those of Grote, Fouillée, and Piat. Of histories I would name those of Zeller, Gomperz, Janet et Séailles, Windelband, Fairbanks, and particularly Burnet, whom I have closely followed in his account of pre-Socratic thought. I am specially indebted to the teaching and writings of Dr. Edward Caird, to Miss Wedgwood's book, *The Moral Ideal*, and to the introductions and essays in Jowett's translation of Plato, of which constant use has been made. For the quotations from Xenophon, I have used the renderings of Mr. Dakyns, whose praise it is to have done for the slighter author, in great measure, what Jowett has done for Plato. The poetical illustrations have been given in the translations of Way, Plumptre, D'Arcy Thompson, and Miss Swanwick, and much help has been received from the introductory matter of the first three, especially that of Mr. Way. I have tried carefully to acknowledge my indebtedness to other writers, but in dealing with ground so often worked over it is difficult to be original. The need of a list of books appears to be obviated by the numerous references given.

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# SOCRATES

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

#### I. The Political Conditions

There never was in ancient free Greece anything of the nature of the political unity which we attach to the idea of national life. Greece was an aggregate of little independent States, cities, each, so far as it was able, absolutely autonomous.[1] So complete was the separation, that only in exceptional cases could the citizen of one small State buy land or houses in another State, contract marriage in it, or be a party to an action in its courts. The ideal in view was that the community should not be too large for each citizen to participate personally in its affairs, and to possess for it a value difficult of realisation in great empires. This held good whether the internal government of the State were democratic, oligarchic, or aristocratic. It was only in circumstances of common peril or under the pressure of the law of the strongest that these States

[1] Grote, *History of Greece*, ii. 183 ; *Greece in the Age of Pericles*, Grant, p. 2.

could ever continue for any length of time in political union.[1] The confederations that existed at different times were so produced: and they usually lasted no longer than the danger endured, and sometimes not so long; for often enough the Greek was prepared to sacrifice the common interest of Hellas for the advantage of his own particular community—Sparta, Athens, or Corinth. Internal rivalries were almost always stronger than the sense of the need of union. And this spirit finally brought its Nemesis in the loss of the liberty the Greeks loved so well. Enemies arose who knew how to play upon these rivalries, to separate the States from each other until at length, worn out by internal dissensions, Greece became an easy prey, first to the ambitious Macedonian princes, and finally to Rome.

Opposing this tendency to isolation there existed certain non-political yet most valuable bases of possible union, which at the same time were marks of a much more profound separation between Greek and non-Greek, than any that existed between the citizens of different Greek States. These were the lineage and language, the religion and festivals, the oracles and customs of Hellas.[2] Tradition assigned to all Greeks a common ancestry. To them, all foreigners were "Barbarians," however highly civilised they might be. All Greeks spoke the same tongue, the dialectical differences not reaching unintelligibility. All practised the same religious rites, and participated from an early period at least in the festivals of the Olympic, Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean games.[3] All revered the Delphian Oracle. All had the negative sign of absten-

[1] Grote, iii. 82, 276, 503. [2] *Ib.* ii. 165, 181. [3] *Ib.* iii. 81.

tion from customs found amongst the outer barbarians, such as "absolute despotism, human sacrifices, polygamy, deliberate mutilation of the person as a punishment, and selling of children into slavery."[1] Besides these influences making for ethical and social unity, although not for political union, there was another great institution — the Amphictyonic Council, assembling half-yearly at Delphi and Thermopylæ for religious purposes, which was practically a league for the defence of the cities in membership, and for the guardianship of the Temple at Delphi.[2] This body never seems to have realised its possibilities. It certainly sanctioned action, supposed to be taken in defence of the honour of the god in the various sacred wars; but motives other than religious were present, and on certain occasions it seems to have become the tool of political schemers. It never developed into what it might have become throughout the struggle against the East, the exponent of united Hellenic patriotism; for its action when Philip declared war against Persia is too isolated to give it this character, and was, in any case, only taken after the Grecian States had lost their independence. It seems to have been often lax in observance of its obligations, ineffective in ameliorating the sufferings of war, and unwise in its judgment of political events in Greece.[3]

The pressure of events did indeed dictate to Greece, at some points in her history, the formation of confederacies with greater cohesive power for defensive action. The Amphictyons were temple guardians:

[1] Smith, *History of Greece*, p. 54. [2] Grote, i. 95, ii. 173 *sq.*
[3] *Ib.* ix. 461, 462, 465; Smith's *Antiquities*, article "Amphictyons."

they were never efficient keepers of Hellenic liberty; and after Greece, united by the pressure of peril, had beaten back the Persian, it was felt the land could not trust to improvised expedients and the force of racial affinity to meet such a crisis again. Some methods must be adopted to unite the scattered elements of Hellas for more efficient resistance to invasion. Up to the time of the capture of Sestos, Sparta, largely by her military prestige, had been virtually acknowledged as leader of the Greek States in war, and the qualities which had elicited confidence at an earlier period were still hers, and exercised much of their former power. "For an instant after the battles of Platæa and Mycale . . . Sparta was exalted to be chief of a full Pan-hellenic union, Athens being only one of the chief members."[1] But many causes were at work to change this. The treasonous conduct of Pausanias, and the incapacity of his countrymen to readily adapt themselves to that maritime warfare in which the Athenians, confident and skilful, had gained brilliant successes, and for which they possessed much greater resources, inclined men to look favourably on the claims of Athens to leadership. The Asiatic Greeks (for the Peloponnesians still leaned to Sparta) were more inclined to trust themselves to a power that could make itself felt on sea and not only on land, and that was in a position to transport troops to Ionia, if need be to meet new attacks.[2] Looking, indeed, on the history of the last twelve or fourteen years, it could not but be felt that it was largely through the bravery and enterprise of the Athenians that the Persians had been driven back.

[1] Grote, iv. 350.

[2] *Ib.* iv. 346 *et seq.*

Marathon, Artemisium, Salamis, and Mycale had witnessed their deeds. They had won fairly, it seemed to many, the right to the foremost place in honour, for they had been foremost in sacrifices. Now, when men were planning how to avert a danger which they felt only slept, Athens, by her activity and supremacy in naval skill and power, seemed marked out plainly as the natural leader in a contest which would be decided by victory or failure at sea. Thus the naval league was formed known as the Confederacy of Delos, to which common proportionate contributions of ships and men were made by the subscribing cities, and the leadership of this league was given to Athens. The preponderating influence which this secured to Athens, while it was, at first, fairly used, was, in time, made subservient to ambitious aims. From the basis of a league of equals, formed for a special object, what was virtually an empire was built up. Through the commutation of contributions of ships and men into money payments, the relationship between the leading State and the members of the confederacy became changed into that of an empire dealing with tributary States.[1] From this cause and from the feeling that the growing wealth and splendour of Athens was owing largely to a misuse of special funds, the jealousy of the rival and revolting States, headed by Sparta, led ultimately to the formation of the Peloponnesian Confederacy, and to the outbreak of that long strife[2] which lasted, with some periods of truce, for twenty-seven years, and ended in the reduction of Athens to a position of political subordination from which she never again emerged.

[1] Grote, iv. 428.

[2] *Ib.* iv. 381.

It was in the time of the incipient Athenian supremacy that Socrates was born,[1] and he lived through the days of its brilliancy and decline. From 469 B.C. to 399 B.C. almost covers the period. His youth was passed in the time of the changing union. His public life as teacher probably began soon after his thirtieth year.[2] By the time he appears as the citizen-soldier serving at Potidæa the equal alliance has already for years been changed into the connection of the Athenian empire with dependent States.[3] By 449 B.C. the common fund of the league had been transferred from Delos to Athens, an outward sign of the changed character of the confederacy. And from this time forward until her utter defeat at Ægospotami, the policy of Athens was imperial rather than federal.[4]

Great internal changes had taken place in Athens itself. The democratic reforms of Cleisthenes were carried to the logical conclusion of absolute popular supremacy in the time of Pericles. Office was thrown open to members of the first three classes in the State. The power of the Council of the Areopagus, which was regarded as a drag on democratic movement, was nearly all withdrawn. It was reduced virtually to a court for the trial of homicides, but its supervisory and censorial functions were taken away. After 460 it takes its place as a venerable antiquity. Henceforth all power is vested in the Assembly, and nearly all offices are filled by lot. There is no permanent civil service, no professional class of judges or advocates, military or naval officers. Appointments of functionaries of every kind are made by lot; administration of law and

[1] Grote, iv. 419.
[2] Abbot, *Pericles*, p. 308.
[3] Grote, iv. 354.
[4] *Ib.* iv. 379.

pleadings are by private citizens acting for the time as jurors, and again as accused or accusers. Everything is arranged with the one idea of securing the undisputed sway of the voters. The general Assembly of the Athenian citizens was summoned to forty regular meetings in each year, beside such others as necessity demanded. And in the times of the Peloponnesian War there must have been many extra meetings. After the meeting had been properly constituted by sacrifice and prayer, and the business formally introduced by the president, any citizen could rise to speak. The power of the Assembly was absolute, and the instrumentality through which the power was used came more and more to be oratory. There was hardly any limit to the influence a skilful speaker could wield through the Assembly. If he succeeded in impressing his views on the people, he might, under the forms of the constitution, be the real ruler of Athens. Such offices as were filled by election would be given to his associates and followers; those that were filled by lot being very numerous in proportion to the whole number of the citizens, were certain to represent the average feeling of the body out of which they came, and not that of any clique of citizens who, on a system of nomination, might by some management have been able to set themselves in opposition to the will of the Assembly.

The legal system at Athens, in the days of Pericles, the Sophists, and Socrates, with its complete absence of professionalism and huge popular juries of citizens paid for their services, was full of consequence for the spirit and temper of the Athenian

people. Laws at Athens were simple and apparently short, as they had to be read to the people once a year for confirmation or change. But there was a marvellous amount of litigation. Whether it was the Greek intellect delighting in subtleties, or the fact that Athens heard more than the causes of her own citizens during the time of her supremacy, or the system by which those who could successfully sustain against another a charge of defrauding the revenue, for example, received a portion of the fine, and so litigiousness became fostered, that was the cause, is hard to tell, but it remains true that legal proceedings formed a disproportionate amount of the interests and distractions of civic life. And these proceedings went on before huge juries of five hundred members, substitutes, indeed, for the General Assembly of the whole people, which the democratic ideal of Athens would have had to be the true judge. All this tended to give a decided cast to Athenian culture, mental and moral. The pathway to all kinds of public service lay through influence in the Assembly. It is true that occasionally a man like Aristides emerges into prominence through sheer force of character; and it is true also that the most influential leader the Athenian assembly ever possessed, Pericles, discarded all the usual demagogic arts, not only without prejudice to his power, but to its increase. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, by the testimony of men widely divergent in standpoint, the tendency on the part of speakers and public men in general was toward the gaining of influence by the art of pleasing; people were given, in the speeches, the views they wanted, not those they needed. Government by debate, with

the Athenians, tended to the cultivation of the partisan spirit rather than the judicial; and the culture that could produce clever advocates, men who could give to measures adopted because of their acceptability to many, and their supposed expediency, the appearance of justice, was in great demand.

## II. The Civic Ideal

The problems of Greek morality, when they were attacked by philosophic reflection, came to be treated largely as questions in political science.[1] The collective unit of the State overshadowed the personal life. A man's moral life could only be approached through a theory of citizenship.[2] True, the conception of the city-State was essentially that of a unity formed by moral relations. But it was the whole that gave worth to the parts. And the idea of an ethic whose claims and ideals should be independent of a man's political environment is of later growth. The significance of the individual *qua* individual had not emerged. As a Greek, belonging to the race possessing a combination of the best qualities of mankind,[3] as a member of a city-State whose highest function was to offer an arena for the play of intellectual forces,[4] and the cultivation of the intellectual life, a man was of immense worth; apart from such relationships, he was a barbarian, naturally fitted to serve those whose

[1] For much in this chapter I desire gratefully to acknowledge my indebtedness to the lectures of Dr. Edward Caird, as well as to his *Evolution of Religion*.

[2] Duncker, *History of Greece*, ii. 310 (trans. Alleyne and Abbott).

[3] Arist., *Polit.* vii. 7, 1327, $19^{b}$ *sq.*

[4] *Ib.* vii. 3, 8, 1325, $16^{a}$, 1328, $21^{a}$.

call to a higher destiny could be read in their higher natural gifts.

According to the Greek idea of the State, intensity of political interest was in inverse proportion to extent of territory. All that a Greek most cared for was included in the range of a few miles beyond the city walls. In the seventh century, Duncker says, "The State did not extend beyond the district, nor law beyond the canton; personal protection was restricted to the same boundaries, and freedom to the influence which might be exercised in a privileged corporation."[1] And when what at first had been necessities of foreign policy led to wider supremacy on the part of successive leading States, the altered conditions never ceased to be regarded as a deflection from the true ideal of Greek polity.

Within its limits the claim of the Greek State upon its citizens was absolute. Ideally speaking, man existed for the State. It was only through it that he could live a life distinguished from "barbarism." Its institutions came to him either with prescriptive authority from a remote past, or were established by the free choice of the citizens acting under the sanction of the gods. Their public undertakings were not distinguishable as civil and religious functions. The city's life in all its activities was hallowed by the protecting deities—Church and State were one. Reined in from expansiveness, not feeling, or not suffering itself to express, sympathy with the great mass of barbarian and servile life, the Greek mind threw itself with the greater intensity into an unselfish enthusiasm for the State. And this disinterested spirit of civic

[1] Duncker, *History of Greece*, ii. 311.

devotion touches much that is best and worst in Hellenic life.

It touches the noblest forms of sacrifice which history and dramatic art enshrine. It has been stated with truth that Greek patriotism normally bent itself to tasks against which modern nations, except in some extraordinary access of feeling, such as that animating revolutionary France in her contest with the monarchies of Europe, would prove recusant. Serving in the army or navy, sitting in the huge juries in the busy law courts, or attending the Assemblies where all important questions of home or foreign policy were settled by direct vote of the citizens, the Athenian was made continually to feel, by direct participation, the oneness of his own life and interest with those of the State. And if the internal polity of aristocratic States differed from that of Athens, there was no difference in the general underlying principle; the whole moral realisation of the individual, his place and work in life, was found in State membership and State service; and the State that gave so much could ask much. States like Sparta, if possible, carried the sense of this even farther. And the forceful brevity of the epitaph on the men of Thermopylæ expresses the matter-of-fact fashion in which sacrifice to the uttermost was regarded. It was simple obedience to law.

> "Go, tell the Spartans thou that passest by,
> That here obedient to their laws we lie."

Traditions like that of Codrus and dramatic creations like Menœceus kept alive the same feeling. The Greek was not his own. He was the State's. "A complete dependence on the State, and the absolute

surrender of the individual member to the body, was the sentiment that had grown with his growth, and formed the groundwork of his moral being. The sum of his duties was to merge his personality in the State, and to have no will of his own distinct from that of the State." [1]

There were various reasons for this absorption of the man in the community. The State was the supreme gain rescued by reason from the chaos of the instinctive life. It was at once the creation and the exponent of law, and in its regulations and institutions the citizen bore his own part. He was not under any alien dominion: if he obeyed he also ruled.[2] He and his fellows were linked together by the invisible cord of Law, to which all were amenable, and for the administration of which in democratic States all were responsible. No doubt special tribal kinships were regarded; but the main idea in the union was not pedigree, it was nationality. Other cities were aggregations of men and collections of dwelling-places; a Greek city in the citizens' eyes was a *human* society, the organism through which the divine power in man ruled the common life. The discourse of reason, that made man what he was, had called the city into being (divine sanctions using human power), and sustained it continually. Law, which the citizen helped to make, was the real ruler.

The spirit of rational justification of institutions was only fully applied within the limited area of the life of the ruling citizens. Their scheme of things did not include the barbarian and the slave as subjects of a

[1] Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew*, ii. 217.
[2] *Ib.* ii. 221.

polity rational throughout. Against the theory of Aristotle, which was really finding a reason for a practice convenient to Greeks, namely, that initial incapacity for free life existed in some men and justified their enslavement, is the consciousness of the opposite expressed by Euripides, who shows the possession of a noble spirit to be no monopoly of freemen. The Helots were neither barbarians by race nor incapable, as history shows, of one of the chief duties of the citizen, soldiership, but their serfdom was severe, even cruel. Everywhere thus, beneath the edifice of free life lies the substructure of slavery. To provide the Greek with the leisure necessary for political discussion, intellectual and artistic pleasures, military exercises and athletics, the needful labours of life had to be performed by slaves. Ideally, politics and soldiering came to be the honoured pursuits. They occupy the foreground in the Greek picture of life. Behind there is a dim mass of slave workers upholding the fabric of leisure and culture, which was the place only of the privileged. To this broad statement there are many modifications needful. All the individuals of a community are never prosperous, and there must have been many in all Greek States who were unable to attain the conventional standard, artisans and shopkeepers. As for traders on a large scale it has perhaps never been insuperably difficult for the most aristocratic conventions to harmonise themselves with wealth. It is certain that, in the time of Socrates at anyrate, Greek Assemblies were made up of all sorts and conditions of men within the limits of citizenship. When he is trying to hearten Charmides to make an essay in political speaking in the Assembly, he asks

him, "Is it the fullers among them of whom you stand in awe, or the cobblers, or the carpenters, or the coppersmiths, or the merchants, or the farmers, or the hucksters of the market-place exchanging their wares, and bethinking them how they are to buy this thing cheap and to sell the other dear,—is it before them you are ashamed; for these are the individual atoms out of which the Public Assembly is composed?"[1] Yet the very tone of this question implies not a little Greek contempt for handicrafts[2] and the fact that democracy had swept into political life great numbers of those who practised them, had not yet quite altered the hold of the original prejudice on men's minds.

Further, there was a certain mechanical rigidity about the conception of the unity of the State. It shifted the centre of thought and interest and devotion from the natural relationships of life to the legal, from the family to the State. There was a fearlessness or rashness in the way that Greek legislators and thinkers followed out the idea of State supremacy, that makes modern experiments in socialistic legislation look the merest child's play in comparison. Lawyers and thinkers were jealous of the family. No rival interest must set itself up in the minds of citizens that might ever conflict with civic loyalty. There is an artificiality here about the Greek State idea. It does not grow. It does not gather up within itself and relegate to a wider unity the unity of the family. It destroys it. The State will suffer no rival near the throne of its citizens' attachment. And in the ideal polity that expressed the deepest thought of Plato there is no room for anything but a thorough-

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. vii. 6 (Dakyns). [2] Grote, ii. 503, 504.

going communism. The State in which the essential Greek idea came nearest realisation was Sparta. The idea was never fully realised even there ;[1] nevertheless, the greater degree of approximation to the perfect subordination of the individual's claims to those of the State, to which Sparta succeeded in attaining,[2] rendered her the object of admiring study on the part of Greek thinkers. And Grote shows that the "Republic" of Plato is but an idealised Sparta with culture added.[3] Athenian life was felt to be unstable. The relative independence of the citizen made coherence and solidity difficult. Though the freest Greek democracy suffered interferences with individual liberty that would be felt intolerable in modern States, this was not enough for the rigour of philosophic theory. "It was from the Spartan institutions (and the Kretan, in many respects analogous) that the speculative philosophers in Greece usually took the point of departure for their theories. Not only Plato did so, but Xenophon and Aristotle likewise. The most material fact which they saw before them at Sparta was a public discipline, both strict and continued, which directed the movements of the citizens, and guided their thoughts and feelings 'from infancy to old age.' To this supreme control the private feelings, both of family and property, though not wholly suppressed, were made to bend ; and occasionally in a way quite as remarkable as any restrictions proposed

[1] Grote, ii. 270.

[2] Cf. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, p. 182 : ". . . the Lacedæmonians also, who may be thought to have come within measurable distance of that perfect city . . ."

[3] Grote, ii. 307.

by either Plato or Xenophon."[1] It was only by an extreme devotion that the small States of Greece could hope to maintain themselves in the independence that was so dear to them. Hence the supreme virtue was patriotism, the limited and intense patriotism of a man whose State was a city. To secure this other things must go. Interests that might conflict with this must be weakened. Thus domestic life and family ties, depreciated by custom, are dissolved in philosophic theory. In the ideal State it is feared that patriotism will suffer if kinship be allowed consciously to exist, and measures are proposed to nullify the natural link. No possibility is to be left of groupings of individuals using relationship to further ambitious purposes. Theoretically, the citizen must live for the State as a Jesuit for his order.

To this standard of her own thinkers Athens never conformed. Nor, for that matter, though extreme enough in individual subordination, did Sparta. There was a flexibility, a responsiveness to manifold influence and interest, a volatility in the Athenian mind which could not have submitted to any such iron rule. The Athenians got and kept the worst of the central idea —the spirit of the subordination of the family—without getting its best, a prevailing sense of the absolute need of loyalty, as the internal changes made in the face of external perils show. Of course, Spartan methods were never adopted at Athens, but the domestic interest suffered depreciation. Family life suffered. The low conception of it that prevailed reduced the Greek matron to the level of an upper servant. The picture of what is meant by Xenophon to be taken as

[1] Grote, *Plato and Companions of Socrates*, iii. 209.

a pattern Greek home is, though containing many pleasing features, a little prosaic, if it be judged as anything beyond sublimated housewifery.[1] And as a result of the incapacity for companionship in Athenian wives, specialised forms of irregular sexual relationship sprang up, all contributing to the strength of the dissolving forces at work in Greek society, and the shadow of the unnameable corruption that lies on Greek life grew darker.

Furthermore, the Athenian culture came itself to be inimical in its prevailing form to the firm consistency of the State. In the time of the city's headship of Greece, the inflow of wealth and the possession of great artistic genius in conjunction resulted in the enrichment of Athens with works of art in an unprecedented degree. The Acropolis was covered with architectural masterpieces. Loveliness in marble dwelt in the open spaces of the city. The theatre was served by genius. In the artistic world of Athens educative influence, in taste and feeling, was thrown round every mind. Art was public, and men lived in an atmosphere of beauty. Suggestion and inspiration were profuse for the sensitive spirit. And while the training of Greek youth remained conservative, mental enrichment went to promote artistic appreciation. But with the advance of popular rule, and the necessity of cultivating those arts of popular address through which lay the avenues to power, a spirit became fostered in men that learned to set its own personal claims and needs over against the hitherto all-embracing demands of State loyalty. In the old days when a conflict had risen, it had been, as in *Antigone*, between the "Sacred and Eternal laws

[1] *Economist*, vii. 7–10. Cf. Benn, *The Greek Philosophers*, i. 158.

of family, reverence to the dead, and the authority of a State Enactment." Antigone gives her life; but in losing it she saves it, and saves the sacredness of the holy human and divine law for which she dies. But now arises the feeling that the individual as such has rights and claims. And the events of history, the plots and counter-plots of rival politicians, democrats, and oligarchs, are the comment on the new spirit. The man detaches himself from the community, and begins to claim a life of his own. The first effect of a change in conception is often to bring a loosening of life from its moral anchorages. The real advance in the mental stand taken up is disguised amid the general upheaval and unrest that disconcert steadfast minds. Incipient individualism in morals showed itself to many as decadence. It is certain that in some respects the Athenians under Pericles had degenerated from the men of Marathon.[1] What Pater calls "the ceaseless prattle" of Athens was fostered and sanctioned by government by discussion. All things were treated as subjects for argument. No realm was left, over the border of which the speculator might not tread. Changes that had deprived institutions like the Areopagus of much of their power, and had largely destroyed veneration for the past, emboldened men to deal with moral standards in the same way. It was not to be assumed that Athenians familiar with arguments, such as those used to the Melians, which could be reduced to a cynically bald justification from custom of the principle that "Might is right,"[2] would all be restrained by veneration for law from seizing their personal advantage in a revolution. The inner unity of the

[1] Benn, *op. cit.* i. 105. [2] Thuc. v. 89.

State was not preserved even by the minimising and depreciating of family claims. The effort to deprive the citizens of a possible rival in devotion to the city, simply resulted in a claim for independence being put in, not in the name of domestic life, but of personal self-assertion and free development. The compensation devised by the Greek State for the relative poverty and baldness of the domestic side of things was a splendid civic life, enriched by the resources of art and spectacular religion. This reached its acme under Pericles. It accomplished much. Through an extraordinary conjunction of circumstances, the presence of wealth and artistic taste in Athens, and an affluence of genius at command, this policy was pursued for fifty years with results that have become possessions for all time. But the end attained was not perhaps the first end sought. What really happened was that the volatile, discursive, flexible element in the Attic Greek was increased, and the restraint and stability and steel-tempered loyalty which the thinkers found in Sparta —the State nearest to their dreams—was lessened.

There existed, then, in the minds of those to whom the Socratic teachings came a traditional idea of devotion to the State still influential in the best minds, but reacted upon by the springing up of a claim for the individual, conscious of a life greatly enriched, and before whom possibilities of self-realisation in other ways than in strict subordination to the claims of the city began to rise.

## III. Religion

It was the case, too, that at this time, when the more stable elements in the Athenian constitution had been greatly weakened, and the general aim was to make all legislation and administration a reflection of the immediate feeling of the citizens, a rationalising process in matters of faith and principle had been going on among the more cultured Greeks, and its results had been filtering through philosophic teaching and poetry into the minds of a wider circle. The religion of the people had at an early stage developed out of the worship of ancient Nature-deities. Tiele says: "The ancient Nature-deities are replaced more and more by gods endowed, not only with the shape of men, but with real humanity, who continually rise in moral dignity and grandeur, and to whom the Greeks transferred the divine element in man."[1] This religion passed through various stages of development, influenced greatly by the early and continuous contact of Greece with Asia, by the fusion, complete or partial, of various foreign conceptions of deities with their own, and largely by the play of Grecian poetic power on the ideas of the gods thus gained. The Homeric deities are personalised and humanised. They are, indeed, while of immortal strength and beauty, men and women of like passions with mankind, and their life in action or suffering is lived in conditions that read like the sublimated conditions of a Greek city.[2] Nevertheless there is movement. The omnipotent Zeus

[1] Tiele, *Outlines of History of Ancient Religion* (trans. Carpenter), p. 205.

[2] *Ib.* p. 214.

is influenced by the personified wisdom, Athena;[1] and his will, in this way and by the fluctuating supremacy of fate saved from arbitrariness, is declared unto men by Apollo, who had already become the Enlightener of men.[2] Through the influence of the worship and oracles of Delphi this system was still further ethicised and purified: the conditions of the religious life became more spiritual as the conception of its essence changed.

This movement was not without its checks; and before it reached its culmination, signs were not wanting that the whole conception of Greek religion must undergo a change of emphasis, if it was to retain its hold on men's minds. In the latter half of the sixth century men felt the traditional explanations of the existing forms of things, the world's life, to be unsatisfying, and began to feel for some rational principle that would illuminate their mental world. But speculators and thinkers were as yet comparatively few Faith was still strong, and a new extension of power was to be given to the Greek religion by the unexampled brilliancy of the service rendered it by Greek art, and especially tragic poetry. It was not the professional exponents of religion, the priests, who were to carry the sway of their faith over the national life of Greece to its farthest limit. The most influential members of this class, the priests of Delphi, indeed, rather lost ground during the crisis of the national struggle with Persia. They did not prove themselves worthy guides to the struggling patriotism of their land. Professor Grant says: "If the oracle at Delphi

[1] Cf. Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, vol. i. p. 269.
[2] Tiele, *op. cit.* pp. 215, 216.

had boldly championed the national defence, the effect upon the war and upon its own future influence could not have failed to be great. But the oracle gave answers sometimes ambiguous, sometimes directly counselling submission and despair."[1] Greece owed little to her professional religious guides. They gave reason for more than suspicion of their integrity, and yielded to party interests what was the sacred trust of Greece. This became so manifest later, in the Peloponnesian War, that the Spartan partialities of an agency supposed to give the pure revelation of the Divine Will, helped to destroy Athenian faith in it, and thus aided the influences making for scepticism. But before this state of things came about, Greek religion was to have a time of efflorescence. Such men as Æschylus and Sophocles were to reveal the utmost that could be drawn from it for moral culture, until a new standpoint was reached.

Æschylus[2] was born at the seat of the Greek mysteries, Eleusis, and is supposed to have been initiated. He fought at Marathon, Artemisium, Salamis, and Platæa. The atmosphere of his childhood was one of piety; the relationships of his life those natural to a member of a family of patriots distinguished for their bravery. The most unquestioned genius, love of country, and profound faith breathe in his writing. No setting of the law of retribution more deep or noble than that given in the *Agamemnon*, the *Choëphoroi*, and the *Eumenides* was ever held up before the mind of the nation. The leader of the Greek army sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia, in obedience to what he accepts as a Divine command,

[1] *Greece in the Age of Pericles*, p. 93.

[2] 524–456 B.C.

in order that the fleet may pass with a favouring wind to the shore of Asia. For this he is slain on his return, in the glory of conquest, to his home, by his wife. Blood will have blood, and in turn Orestes constitutes himself his father's avenger, and executes justice on his mother and her paramour. But in the hour of the triumph of this primitive law the faces of the Furies, the avengers of the matricide, begin to peep and gibber about its executant. Fear seizes him:

> "Thoughts past control are whirling me along,
> Their captive slave: while terror in my heart
> Her pæan and her frenzied dance prepares."[1]

Unseen by others, at first, these loathly ministrants of the vengeance of the older Gods of primal law and blood feud drive him to seek the protection of Apollo at Delphi. Thither he is pursued, but he finds his way to the stone of sanctuary and is protected by Apollo notwithstanding the clamour of the Furies. Then the scene changes to the Temple of Athena at Athens: Orestes is a suppliant, the Furies his accusers. Athena appears, listens to the statements of the various parties, and institutes the court of the Areopagus to try the cause. The result is the acquittal of Orestes, but the Furies are appeased by having given to them local honours and a home at Athens. They invoke blessings on the city, and their name is changed from Furies to Eumenides, the benevolent spirits. The curse resting on the race of the Atridæ is uprooted by the divine intervention. The relative right of the avengers of the law of blood-guiltiness, resting on

[1] Æsch., *Choëph.* ll. 1023–1025 (Swanwick).

primal instincts, is compromised with the higher claim of sanctity for relations made by law and hallowed by revelation. Retribution is divine, but there is a divine redemption also. A subordinate issue is obedience to authority, the authority of divinely provided institutions.

In Æschylus, Zeus is intermittently represented as omnipotent and subject to fate; it would be truer to say fate was the last word of the Æschylean doctrine. But it is in its inconsistencies that the doctrine is illuminating. Zeus or some other God

> ". . . doth upon the guilty send
> Erinys' late-avenging pest."

And in the Trojan War:

> "So for the dame, by many wooed,
> Doth mighty Zeus who shields the guest
> 'Gainst Paris send th' Atridan brood;
> Struggles limb-wearing, knees earth-pressed.
> The spear shaft rudely snapt in twain
> In war's initial battle,—these
> For Danaoi as for Trojans he decrees.
> As matters stand, they stand; the yet to be
> Must issue as ordained by destiny."[1]

Retribution is unfailing: man's sin finds him out:

> "Spoiled be the spoiler: who sheds blood must bleed,
> While Zeus surviveth shall this law survive.
> Doer must suffer."[2]

> "But who unforced with spirit free
> Dares to be just is ne'er unblest;
> Whelmed utterly he cannot be:
> But for the wretch with lawless breast,

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[1] *Agam.* 58–68 (Swanwick). [2] *Ib.* 1562–1564.

Bold seizer of promiscuous prey,—
I warn you,—he, perforce, his sail
In time shall strike, when troubles him assail,
And breaks his yard-arm 'neath the tempest's sway."[1]

But the moral unit emphasized is the race rather than the individual. The verdict on the soul that sinneth is not merely that it shall die, but that its race shall lie under a ban; and the blessing of the righteous comes upon his seed:

"Apart I hold my solitary creed.
Prolific truly is the impious deed;
Like to the evil stock, the evil seed;
But fate ordains that righteous homes shall aye
Rejoice in goodly progeny."[2]

Judgment may not be speedily executed against an evil work, but it is certain:

"This the sum of wisdom hear:—
Justice' altar aye revere,
Nor ever dare,
Lusting after worldly gear,
With atheist foot to spurn: beware,
Lurketh Retribution near,
Direful issue doth impend;
Honour then with holy fear
Thy parents—household rights revere,
Nor guest-observing ordinance offend."[3]

The older views, belonging in their unquestioned firmness to a time and order passing away, find representation in Æschylus. These harsh Goddesses who pursue the avenger of blood are said to have the determination of men's destinies.[4] There is even a jealousy in heavenly minds of human prosperity.

[1] *Eumenides*, 550–556.
[2] *Agam.* 757–762.
[3] *Eumen.* 538–548.
[4] *Ib.* 930, 931.

Agamemnon fears to accept the honours paid to him at his home-coming, and the chorus share his feeling. The wise preserve their prosperity by resigning some of its blessings:

> "Sailing with prosperous course elate,
> Strikes on the hidden reef men's proud estate.
> Then if reluctant Fear, with well-poised sling,
> His bales doth into ocean fling,
> Riseth once more the bark; and though
> With evil freighted to the full,
> Floateth secure the lightened hull."[1]

Æschylus brings forth out of his treasure things old and new. Transition is in his theology from the harsher and less moralised picture of divine workings of an earlier time, to a softened representation which is virtually the result of a compromise. The Apollo worship and the Apollo revelations represent the newer spirit. The older powers only partially humanised are conciliated; they reveal to those who grant them rightful honour their benevolent will, and from the Furies become the Eumenides. It is not yet a complete transformation, but one on the way. The rights of the newer theology, that is more in accord with all humane intuitions, find recognition and a place beside what is undisputed in the old.

In belief in an order of righteousness, Sophocles is not less strong than his predecessor:

> "Would 'twere my lot to lead
> My life in holiest purity of speech,
> In purity of deed,
> Of deed and word whose Laws high-soaring reach

[1] *Agam.* 1001–1013.

Through all the vast concave,
Heaven-born, Olympos their one only sire!
To these man never gave
The breath of life, nor shall they e'er expire
In dim oblivion cold:
In these God shows as great and never waxeth old."[1]

And:

"No ordinance of Man shall override
The settled laws of Nature and of God;
Not written these in pages of a book,
Nor were they framed to-day or yesterday:
We know not whence they are, but this we know,
That they from all eternity have been,
And shall to all eternity endure."[2]

But fate in an eternal rule of right does not find in current events its obvious and invariable support. If it were always seen to be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, the problems of tragedy and ethics would disappear. But no such simple key can unlock for us the complexities of human experience. It is pleasant to be both good and prosperous, but the link that joins propriety and prosperity often cannot be seen:

"If one among the gods shall will it so,
The coward shall escape the better man."[3]

Hyllus in the *Trachiniæ* says of unmerited pain:

". . . The Gods. . . . Oh pardon them not,
For the deeds that are ever being done,
Who, being and bearing the name
Of Fathers, look on such wrong.

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[1] *Œd. Rex.* 863–871 (Plumptre's trans., *Tragedies of Sophocles, Appendix of Rhymed Choral Odes*, p. 426).

[2] *Antigone*, 453–457 (trans. D'Arcy W. Thompson in *Sales Attici*, p. 65).

[3] *Ajax*, 455 (*ib.* p. 69).

> What cometh, no man may know,
> What is, is piteous for us,
> Base and shameful for Them,
> And for him who endureth this woe,
> Above all that live hard to bear."[1]

Philoctetes is not astonished that men like Odysseus and Thersites have survived the perils of war-time:

> ". . . For nothing bad will die,
> So well the Gods do fence it round about;
> And still they joy to turn from Hades back
> The cunning and the crafty, while they send
> The just and good below, what thoughts can I
> Of such things form, how offer praise, when still,
> Praising the Gods, I find the Gods are base."[2]

He voices moral perplexity and the sense of the mystery of pain. It is true that he tries to make the burden of the moral apportionments of the Gods lighter by showing how the sufferers are sinners also. But this is much less strongly brought before us than the passive helplessness of those who are swept along in the stream of fate. Ajax is guilty of rousing the goddess Athena to fierce wrath by boastful words, of asserting that his own right arm will get him victory, and he is punished with madness.[3] His spirit is Nebuchadnezzar's, and his fate more dreary. Still here is not the purging of ancestral wrong, but suffering for individual sin. Philoctetes[4] and Hercules[5] and others are personally guilty in some (and these very unequal) particulars. In such cases, while the discrepancy between the wrong and the penalty may

[1] *Trachiniæ*, 1266–1274 (Plumptre).
[2] *Philoc.* 445–452 (Plumptre).
[3] *Ajax*, 766–769.
[4] *Philoc.* 1326.
[5] *Trach.* 269–278.

seem often amazing, yet the personal offence precedent to personal suffering simplifies the problem.

In other cases the adjustment is less easy, Strange as it appears at first, the assertion in Sophocles, both of the social and personal moral relations of the individual, seems more unqualified than in Æschylus.[1] He is to carry the moralisation of the religion a stage further; but his method does not seem at first to promise this. No doubt he stands for a milder type of Grecian orthodoxy. The general outline is the same, but harsh features are softened so that the general effect is one of exquisite beauty rather than of the tremendous and even oppressive grandeur of the Æschylean tragedy. There are modifications and restrictions of the older statements and developments that are new. But these do not at first seem to tend in the direction of clearing of moral difficulty. Punishment from the Gods descends with overwhelming weight on those who have not, like Orestes, chosen to violate law (granting that his choice was made in obedience to a divine command, which is shown to possess a higher claim), but whose experience is one of suffering, not of conscious sin. The thought of a personality that is not individual, of a character and destiny belonging to a race, of guilt and righteousness as real and meriting punishment or reward, while yet they have their roots not in the will of him whom the Gods bless or ban, meets us constantly in Sophocles. With him the tendency is to shift the interest rather from divinity to humanity.[2] In his view of guilt and punishment he seems sometimes to

[1] Cf. *The Moral Ideal*, Wedgewood, p. 95.

[2] Zeller, *Socrates*, p. 31: "The tragedy of Sophocles moves entirely in the world of men."

occupy the same ground as Æschylus. In both, the fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. The hereditary curse plays its great part in his dramas, too; and from it there is no escape. But the emphasis seems to fall differently. Lives in themselves free from stain are made to feel the bitterness of sin's penalty. In the older poet the doctrine is simpler, a message of retribution, man's sin will find him out; in Sophocles the feeling is more complex; there is a greater sensitiveness to the frequent unintelligibility of the world's moral ordering; to the complexity of the problem of individual suffering for family offences, and its resistance to a perfectly simple solution. The process of disentangling the individual from the unity of the family or clan has gone a little farther than in Æschylus.[1] The position of these writers may be roughly illustrated from Hebrew ethics. In the Second Commandment it is virtually stated, and, in the early history of Israel, constantly illustrated, that the individual as such has no true existence. The strand of the separate life has never been separated from the unity of the family or tribal cord, in which alone it finds its meaning and value. There is no shock experienced by the Hebrew conscience in receiving the statement of transmitted guilt. Men act upon the principle, and slay with stones or swords the wives, the infants, and all the connections of guilty persons. Later, the mind reacts upon the command, and through its spiritual intuitions the command takes a modified

[1] Cf. Miss Wedgewood's chapter, "Greece and the Harmony of Opposites," in *The Moral Ideal*, to which I am indebted in this whole section; pp. 96, 97, on *Œd. Col.*

form. God requites the sinner in his proper person.[1] Later still in Ezekiel, guilt and goodness alike become purely personal.[2] The proverb that describes the nation as suffering for ancestral transgression is no more to be used in the land of Israel; the single personality, buried hitherto in its natural environment of relationships, family and national, is brought out into the light, and an ethic that is truly individual is born. It is only, of course, in the crudest fashion that this progress of thought, spread over centuries, helps to make clear a progress spread only over two generations. The parallel breaks down at many points. Nevertheless there are elements of correspondence. The morality of Æschylus consists of the doctrine of retribution; and the individual is still inextricably bound up with his race. Nor is it that in Sophocles his personal destiny is disentwined from the family fate; but there is more consciousness (and still more in Euripides) of the fact that there is a destiny to be accounted for. The Œdipus of Sophocles protests eloquently his unconsciousness of evil at the time that he fell into his greatest offences against Divine law, but his race must go on "dreeing its awful weird."[3] Part of the punishment of sin Æschylus believes to be the voluntary repetition in another form of the primal offence; there is a personal endorsement of the preceding fall;[4] but in Sophocles the incidence of the stress seems to be plainly on the absolute separation of the individual from the willing initiation of the deed

[1] W. E. Addis' translation of *The Documents of the Hexateuch*, ii. 68.
[2] Ex. xx. 5 compared with Deut. vii. 9, 10; Ezek. xviii.
[3] *The Moral Ideal*, Wedgewood, pp. 95–99.
[4] Æsch., *Agam.* 758–760.

that is punished. It is not that, as in Antigone's case, for example, there is complete explanation of the tragic issue from her disobedience to the laws which have a relative claim upon her life, in loyalty to those which are of everlasting validity. It is that she and all the persons of the play, indeed, are caught up in the sweep and embrace of a law of vindicative righteousness, the action of which takes its spring behind all their lives. If the importance of the personal life and the part of character in shaping destiny are to be emphasised, it would seem that the writer will only do it in conjunction with the emphatic statement of collective responsibility for the violation of Divine prescriptions. There is no reasonable relation between the fate of Œdipus, as is brought out clearly by Miss Wedgewood, and the desolation of his house.[1] Personally, he is free from offence in the matter for which he is judged; if, to be unconscious of wrong, innocent of evil intent, is to be free. It is not for killing a man, but for killing his own father, with all the consequences of that act, that he is punished, in fulfilment of the oracle. His protests make clear the idea of individual guilt; and his suffering emphasizes the ancestral wrong. He does not consciously accept a task from a God's hands which means the incurring of guilt. He glides unconsciously into sin.

It is here that Sophocles carries us a little farther toward the conception of the moral personality. Job said that, though he should die, he would hold fast his integrity. And the Greek Œdipus

[1] *The Moral Ideal*, p. 96.

does not dream of affecting a contrition that he does not feel.

"*Chor.* Thou suffer'dst . . .[1]
*Œd.* Yes, I suffered fearful things.
*Chor.* And thou hast done?
*Œd.* I have not done.
*Chor.* What then?
*Œd.* I did but take as gift what I, poor wretch,
Had, at my country's hands, not merited.
*Chor.* Poor sufferer, what but that? And didst thou kill . . .?
*Œd.* What sayest thou now? What wishest thou to learn?
*Chor.* Thy father?
*Œd.* Ah, thou strikest blow on blow.
*Chor.* Didst slay him?
*Œd.* Yea, I slew him; but in this . . .
*Chor.* What sayest thou?
*Œd.* I have some plea of right.
*Chor.* How so?
*Œd.* I'll tell thee. Not with knowledge clear
I smote and slew him; but I did the deed,
By law, not guilty, ignorant of all."

Here is the clear conception of sin as born in thought, which was to emerge more clearly into light. But the statement of the individual's concern with it is not completely made when this is set forth. There remains, besides the moral unity of the individual, the unity in which his life has its roots, of ancestry and society. And, without this thought having its rights, neither Jewish nor Greek religious ideas can become clear to us. The saints of Judaism, the Jeremiahs and Ezras and Daniels, not only suffered with their people, but felt that they had sinned with them. They confessed the nation's sin as their sin, and accepted national punishment as their punishment. "We must, if we

[1] *Œd. Colon.* 537–548.

would be in sympathy with the spirit of ancient life, accept the belief that ancestral is, in some sense, real guilt. We must teach ourselves to regard the dogma of original sin as a great historic influence, whatever we may think of it on theologic ground. The sense in which the individual is a fragment and the sense in which he is a unity must both be taken into account if we would reach the point of view from which Greek feeling confronted Fate and Guilt."[1] In all life, now as then, there are the fixed and the free elements. And the consideration of the fixed affects the estimate of the action of the free. If it is to sophisticate the moral consciousness to father sin on ancestry or circumstances, it is utterly to misjudge it to suppose that any perfect estimate of guilt can be gained without seeing the larger unity to which the Greek so persistently attributed moral attributes and a moral destiny.

All pain is not mysterious. It is often disciplinary. In it the reverential and submissive spirit grows. The hasty interpretation, which misses the profounder meanings of events, is abandoned, and pride and anger die in resignation. Œdipus pleads for exile to save the city from harm,[2] and is full of concern for his helpless girls.[3] Neoptolemus returns to his truth and simplicity through sympathetic pain felt for Philoctetes.[4]

The aim throughout seems to be the construction of

[1] *The Moral Ideal*, Wedgewood, pp. 96–97.
[2] *Œd. Rex.* 1449, 1450.
[3] *Ib.* 1462 *sq.*
[4] *Philoc.* 902, 903, 965, 966, 1074–1080, 1224, 1228, 1234, 1236.

a theodicy. Rest comes to the perturbed and shamed Ajax in the grave:

> "His death hath brought . . .
> Great joy to him; for what he sought to gain,
> Yea, death that he desired, he now hath won."[1]

And in the Grove of the Gracious Ones, the spirits of remorse and vengeance become the friends of the heart-broken king, and receive him to their asylum of peace, through which he passes to his final haven. He is taught to pray:

> "Eumenides, the Gentle ones, . . .
> With gentle hearts receive and save your suppliant."[2]

With him who seeks mercy they show themselves merciful. He has the vicarious pleadings of an innocent daughter on his side, about which he says:

> "For one soul working in the strength of love
> Is mightier than ten thousand to atone."[3]

And when he dies it is by the mysterious but peaceful agency of the reconciled Gods:

> "What form of death
> He died, knows no man, but our Theseus only.
> For neither was it thunderbolt from Zeus
> With flashing fire that slew him, nor the blast
> Of whirlwind sweeping o'er the sea that hour,
> But either some one whom the Gods had sent,
> To guide his steps, or else the abyss of earth,
> In friendly mood, had opened wide its jaws
> Without one pang. And so the man was led
> With nought to mourn for—did not leave the world
> As worn with pain and sickness; but his end
> If any ever was, was wonderful."[4]

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[1] *Ajax*, 967, 968.
[2] *Œd. Col.* 486, 487.
[3] *Ib.* 498, 499.
[4] *Ib.* 1656–1665.

When we pass to Euripides the change is great. He is the poet of the new spirit of democratic and philosophic Athens, the friend of Socrates, the man who did for tragedy what his friend was said by Cicero[1] to do for philosophy, called "it down from heaven and established it in the cities, introduced it even into private houses, and compelled it to investigate life, and manners, and what was good and evil among men." The main interest of the drama representing life is not theological but human. It is less the sustaining of a thesis, and more the presentation of a picture. The end is an ethical interest, which seems almost hidden in an emotional one. But there were other great differences between Euripides and his predecessors. The times were altered. Education was in the hands of the Sophists, and was largely a training in debating power,—the usage of knowledge and rhetoric for practical ends in gaining pleas or places. Everyone either discussed or listened to discussions, or did both daily, and on all subjects. Changes had taken place in politics; men had become accustomed to instability, one might say. Institutions crumbled and principles were abandoned. And the stage reflected this. And, because of this, Euripides has been misunderstood and decried by men who have allowed their dislike of the prevailing conditions at Athens to extend to the man in whose writings they have seen reflections of the upheaval and unrest of the poet's time. He has been called a rationalist, an unbeliever, a stage rhetorician, an unprincipled declaimer; one who, while he is shaking the foundations of religion, plays the moralist.[2]

[1] Cicero, *Tusc.*, Disp. v. 4, 10.

[2] A. W. von Schlegel, trans. in Donaldson's *Theatre of the Greeks*, p. 227.

It has been said that Aristophanes "might assert without any excess of malice or exaggeration that Euripides had persuaded men there were no Gods."[1] This is obsolete criticism. Euripides was the poet of the new spirit, the teacher who gave a new statement of religion, the humanitarian prophet. He used the critical acid of his keen reflection to eat into the decaying Homeric theology, but his end was not negation. He meant to moralise the Greek creed. To men who could not understand the end of his reflection, he seemed merely another dissolving force in Athenian life, distinguished from others by his genius. They cannot see that this man, to whom the Gods of Greece appear often as at a lower moral level than their worshippers, can be the preacher of a purer faith. All that wit, inspired by malice and principles of reaction, could do to blight his power was done by Aristophanes; but he could not be prevented from securing the verdict, first of an "acute and honourable minority," and then of a larger circle that widens still. "More, perhaps," it has been said, "than any other ancient writer, he reveals to us the true inner Greek life, lays bare the secrets of its hearts."[2] His was not the spirit of fear. It was not the spirit of ideal calm and classic perfection. He represented the perplexity and passion, the suffering and love, the new doubts and new standards of a time of transition.

It is hard, but not impossible, to discriminate between sentences spoken in character and those which express the author's own view. And there are some

[1] Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew*, i. 289.

[2] Way, *The Tragedies of Euripides*, vol. ii. p. l, from which work the translations that follow are taken.

things in which we may fairly consider that we have the true thought of Euripides. Scepticism springs from the moral inequalities of life. Talthybius, considering the sorrows of Hecuba, asks:

"What should I say, Zeus? That thou look'st on men?
Or that this fancy false we vainly hold
For nought, who deem there is a race of Gods
While chance controlleth all things among men?"[1]

Yet the sufferer herself is firm in the faith that omnipotence serves righteousness, of whose existence in heaven we assure ourselves by its presence among men:

"Yet are the Gods strong, and their Ruler strong,
Even Law; for by this Law we know Gods are,
And live: and make division of wrong and right."[2]

Agamemnon holds by the ethics that teach that experience reflects moral condition:

"Now fair befall: for all man's weal is this—
Each several man's, and for the State—that ill
Betide the bad, prosperity the good."[3]

The man who has warped his own moral sense feels life to be:

"a tale
Told by an idiot; full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

He says:

"Nought is there man may trust, nor high repute,
Nor hope that weal shall not be turned to woe;
But the Gods all confound, hurled forth and back,
Turmoiling them, that we through ignorance
May worship them."[4]

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[1] *Hecuba*, 488–491, trans. by Way, *The Tragedies of Euripides* in English verse.

[2] *Ib.* 799–801. [3] *Ib.* 902–904. [4] *Ib.* 956–960.

But others can see in Polymnestor's own life the working of the law of retribution.[1] Foul treachery meets its just doom.[2]

Sometimes action, which is to lead to the expiation of ancestral wrong, is represented as being divinely ordained. For the sin of Tantalus, it is said of his descendant Atreus, son of Pelops:

> ". . . born to him was Atreus
> For whom with her doom-threads Fate twined a strand
> Of strife against Thyestes, yea, his brother."[3]

In this light Atreus was a fated criminal.

And so was Orestes:

> "What boots it to lay wrong to Phœbus' charge
> Who thrust Orestes in to slay the mother
> That bare him?—few but cry shame on the deed
> Though in obedience to the God he slew."[4]

But fated sin can yet breed remorse. If a relative moral claim be made absolute,[5] the passing identified with the permanent, the experience that ensues is that of self-accusation; the dread of vengeance distracts him.[6] The deed believed to be God-inspired is yet felt to be accursed.[7] The sin is laid at the door of the Deity,[8] not in the spirit of the Hebrews who felt that there was ultimately only one real power in the world, and said, "O God, why hast Thou hardened our hearts from Thy fear, and caused us to err from Thy ways?" but because of a supposed divine command.[9] It is true that conscience and the spirit of reflection play so

[1] *Hecuba*, 1085–1087. [2] *Ib.* 1247, 1248, 1254. [3] *Orestes*, 11–14.
[4] *Ib.* 28–31. [5] *Ib.* 579–581. [6] *Ib.* 37, 38.
[7] *Ib.* 285–287. [8] *Ib.* 594–599. [9] *Ib.* 414–418.

freely on the oracles that the divinity of those that revolt the heart comes ultimately to be questioned.[1] But they are operative because, at the moment, their imperative is believed to be divine. The worshipper begins to grow more moral than his Gods, and will not call that divine which the best feeling of the race condemns.[2] Œdipus, too, was a fated man, and says as to his sorrows[3] and deeds[4] that he passed to his sons

> "... the curse received of Laius;
> For not so witless am I from the birth,
> As to devise these things against mine eyes
> And my son's life: but by the finger of God."

All his life is the fulfilment of an oracle, even to his last finding of an asylum at Colonus.[5] Mortals can only bear their fate.[6]

This fate itself, which is usually, in Greek poetry, a power behind the Gods, seems in Euripides to be sometimes a name for their will;[7] it becomes then a thing referable to moral judgments, not blind and inscrutable, but a personal determination to be criticised like a human resolve on ethical grounds. Again, it is that upon which even Zeus is dependent for the accomplishment of his purposes:

> "I have mused on the words of the wise,
> Of the mighty in song;
> I have lifted mine heart to the skies,
> I have searched all truth with mine eyes,
> But nought more strong

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[1] *Andromache*, 1161–1165; *Electra*, 981.
[2] *Orestes*, 416–419.
[3] *Phœnissæ*, 1604–1607.
[4] *Ib.* 1612–1614.
[5] *Ib.* 1703, 1705–1707.
[6] *Ib.* 1763.
[7] *Medea*, 1415–1419; *Hippolytus*, 438.

Than Fate have I found: there is nought
In the tablets of Thrace,
Neither drugs whereof Orpheus taught
Nor in all that Apollo brought
To Asklepius' race,
When the herbs of healing he severed, and out
of their anguish delivered,
The pain—distraught.

There is none other Goddess beside,
To the altars of whom
No man draweth near, nor hath cried
To her image, nor victim hath died,
Averting her doom.
O Goddess, more mighty for ill
Come not upon me
Than in days over past: for his will
Even Zeus may in no wise fulfil
Unholpen of thee.
Steel is molten as water before thee, but
never relenting came o'er thee,
Who art ruthless still."[1]

The main feature of Euripides' references to the Gods is that the object of worship must be moralised. Often it is the aspect of negation that is prominent, but it is because the popular pantheon is in his mind. He will none of it. Nor can he reconcile himself to the moral apportionments that visit punishment on a fate-driven, distracted soul. If the cry of penitence for a predestinate crime is heard, it comes from the bewilderment of suffering; the spirit that has risen to clear thought separates itself from the sin. Sins of its own remain, but for the God-apportioned lot, if it was meant to be different, the deity should have made it different. Sometimes his personages can speak the things of the

[1] *Alcestis*, 962–983.

unpurged creed, as when Electra traces human misfortunes to divine jealousy;[1] but the old submissive, irreflective spirit is gone. It is not an answer to Euripides, or to the minds for which he speaks, to say, "The Gods will it." He asks what is the moral quality of this will, and traditional representations give him no relief. Hippolytus declares the service of the Gods vain, because they are unjust. "All vainly I reverenced God, and in vain unto man was I just."[2] Theseus says the Gods have been deceivers; Hippolytus wishes that human curses could reach them.[3] Iolaus shrinks from saying what he feels about Persephone.[4] Iphigeneia is less fearful. She is revolted at the idea of a Goddess who can delight in human sacrifices, and concludes that it is man's invention, to hallow his own dark deeds; and that the story of the banquet of Tantalus is incredible.[5] Herakles rationalises the Gods in whom he believes.[6] Ion criticises the indiscriminating unmoral character of their protection.[7] Hermione accuses them of having part in wrong.[8] They whelm innocent and guilty in common ruin.[9] Orestes accuses the God of folly and crime in the name of his own sense of what is fitting.[10] Scepticism and moral disorder reign.[11] Still the working of an ancestral curse is felt as an ordinance of God.[12] Ion expostulates with Phœbus in the plainest terms, and tells him that he and Zeus and

[1] *Orestes*, 971–981.
[2] *Hipp.* 1364–1369.
[3] *Ib.* 1415.
[4] *Heracl.* 600, 601.
[5] *Iphigeneia in Taurica*, 380–391.
[6] *Hercules Furens*, 1341–1346; cf. Acts xvii. 25.
[7] *Ion*, 1312–1319.
[8] *Androm.* 901–903.
[9] *Suppliants*, 226–228.
[10] *Electra*, 971–973, 979.
[11] *Medea*, 409–413.
[12] *Hipp.* 830–832.

Poseidon "work unrighteousness."[1] Hecuba thinks the Gods to be "sorry helpers" in the hour of need, and prayer to them is a matter of propriety.[2] Life is a vain show.[3] The Chorus in *Electra* is rationalistically bold enough to reject the legend of the sun's turning away from the horrors of the Thyestean banquet.[4] And the chorus in the *Iphigeneia at Aulis* is equally incredulous as to the Legend of Leda and the Swan.[5]

The orthodox methods of ascertaining the will of the Deity are not in the poet's eyes of much value. The art of the soothsayer is full of risk and temptation:[6]

> ". . . What is a seer?
> A man who speaks few truths but many lies,
> When his shafts hit,—where ill shoots ruin him."[7]

Yet this critic of Greek orthodoxy is a man with plenty of faith if he has not much belief. Current polytheism repels it, that is all. True, the Gods he believes in may seem dim and intangible. In *Helen* the Chorus asks:

> "Who among men dare say that he, exploring,
> Even to creation's farthest limit line,
> Ever hath found the God of our adoring,
> That which is not God, or the half-divine—
> Who that beholdeth the decrees of Heaven,
> This way and that in hopeless turmoil swayed?[8]

And sometimes divinity in things seems a principle not

[1] *Ion*, 436–451.
[2] *Troades*, 469–471.
[3] *Hecuba*, 623–628.
[4] *Electra*, 737–742.
[5] *Iph. at Aul.* 794–800.
[6] *Phœnissæ*, 954–958.
[7] *Iph. at Aul.* 956–958.
[8] *Helen*, 1137–1143.

a person, a name for order in the mind and the world, "a power that makes for righteousness":

> "O Earth's Upbearer, thou whose throne is Earth,
> Whoe'er thou be, O past our finding out,
> Zeus, be thou Nature's Law, or mind of man,
> To thee I pray; for treading soundless paths,
> In justice dost thou guide all mortal things."[1]

Yes, somewhat dimly embodied as compared with the clear outline and rich colouring of the robust Olympians, the Gods of Euripides' faith are workers of justice amongst men.[2] Holy human love and their law agree.[3] The end of a train of actions and events is that justice is wrought.[4] The "rod of the wicked" is not allowed to "rest upon the lot of the righteous."[5] When the element of wrong in mistaken obedience to a law that has only a relative and subordinate validity has been atoned for, the sinner is reconciled with the higher laws.[6] The conflict of the claims, obedience to one of which has wrought the misery of Orestes, is stated by Tyndareus, who is all for the supremacy of law, with its ordered processes and the regulation of the instincts that found expression in the blood-feud.[7] Orestes, to do a great right, did no little wrong.[8] Orestes himself thinks his act of vengeance a wrong done in obedience to a right demand:

> "I know me guilt-stained with a mother's death,
> Yet pure herein, that I avenged my sire."[9]

The divine decision must arbitrate between the warring

[1] *Troades*, 884–888.
[2] *Phœnissæ*, 155.
[3] *Ib.* 1663–1665.
[4] *Electra*, 954–956.
[5] *Ib.* 1349–1356.
[6] *Ib.* 1266, 1267, 1301, 1302, 1290, 1291.
[7] *Orestes*, 491–525.
[8] *Ib.* 538, 539.
[9] *Ib.* 546, 547, 561–563.

claims. If, in blind obedience to what was felt to be a divine mandate, guilt has been contracted by a breach of an equally valid law, the God upon whom the guilt is laid can grant absolution.[1] Justice is not to be found in the blind following of any one of the many laws, each of which can plead its relative justification. The true oracle cannot ultimately be found in contradiction to the holiest moods and motions of the soul.

The theology of Euripides is not all innovation. The old jealousy of the Gods against immoderate power exists.[2] But there is protest against a vengeance that does not discriminate,[3] and when Medea disregards such protest it is not because of the old idea of inherited sin, but with the deliberate intention of striking at the heart of the false Jason through his children. With some inconsistency and wavering, indeed, the moral unit tends to become personal. It is believed that a mistaken prayer can be recalled;[4] that warnings are given to those who are falling into sin,[5] and that punishment itself is meant to be a safeguard for the as yet unpunished;[6] that God discerns the quality of oaths, and is not deceived by an obedience that is of the letter only;[7] that man's efforts are futile unless Gods exist to reward righteousness;[8] that if the "mills of God grind slowly they grind exceeding small," and it is well with the good in the end;[9] that on the whole an optimistic view is justified;[10] that it is a shame if the knowledge of God include not

[1] *Orestes*, 596–598.
[2] *Medea*, 127–130.
[3] *Ib.* 115–117.
[4] *Hipp.* 891, 892.
[5] *Bacchæ*, 787–791.
[6] *Ib.* 1326, 1327.
[7] *Iph. at Aul.* 394, 395.
[8] *Ib.* 1033, 1035.
[9] *Ion*, 1614, 1615, 1621, 1622.
[10] *Iketides*, 196–200.

the practice of justice,[1]—a justice whose home is in the soul.[2]

The human service dwelt on and praised is congruous with these ideas as to the divine view of things. If speculation emerges as to the origin of goodness, whether it is traceable to nature or to education,[3] there is much insistence on a truly human ideal. No doubt in some things the poet occupies the old ground. The natural state of Greeks is one of hostility to barbarians.[4] Diplomatic untruth can be counselled when it is in honour of a God.[5] Irreverence means ruin.[6] Man in enjoyment of the goods of providence falls into presumptuous sin.[7] The great virtue of Greek life is hospitality. It is the exercise of this by Admetus, even in his dark hour, that shows his worth according to the writer's conception, however little we in another age and land can be moved to see excellence in so poor a creature.[8] It is impious to reject the claim of suppliants.[9] It is the violation of the sacred law that protects the guest that intensifies Polymnestor's guilt in the murder of Polydorus.[10] He has sinned against Gods below and Gods above,[11] against what the Chorus conceives of as possibly separate, the claims of justice and divine law.[12] In some sense sacrifice and feast are believed to expiate sin,[13] but the conditions on which prayer is heard are moral.[14] There is much about vengeance, but also something about forgiveness.[15] The ideal of manhood is unselfish service,[16] devotion to the

[1] *Helen*, 914–923. [2] *Ib.* 1002, 1003. [3] *Hecuba*, 595–602.
[4] *Ib.* 1199–1201. [5] *Bacchæ*, 333–336. [6] *Ib.* 1303, 1305.
[7] *Suppliants*, 216–218. [8] *Alcestis*, 1147, 1148.
[9] *Heracleidæ*, 101–104, 107, 108. [10] *Hecuba*, 714–720.
[11] *Ib.* 788–797. [12] *Ib.* 1029–1034. [13] *Medea*, 1381–1383.
[14] *Ib.* 1391, 1392. [15] *Hipp.* 1449. [16] *Heracleidæ*, 1–5.

state even to the uttermost;[1] Creon and Menœceus are types of this perfect patriotism amongst men. Hippolytus, stricken by the God in answer to his father's erring prayer, mourns for his father more than for his own death; and Theseus utters the longing, "Would God I could but die for thee, my son!" recalling David's words over the dead Absalom. Greek and Hebrew join in the passionate desire for renunciation, wherein the higher self comes to its own. Love knows no rank, and the lowly service and sympathy of Theseus touch a deep human note.[2]

But it is in his pictures of womanhood[3] that Euripides gives us the noblest embodiments of his ethical ideal. The simple "unlessoned girl" Polyxena finds life not worth living save nobly.[4] She grieves for the broken promise of her youth, but welcomes death as the alternative of slavery. Hecuba wishes to die for her daughter, but is set the harder task of life, in which, however, she can almost lose her grief in admiration of her daughter's heroism.[5] Iolaus offers himself to be delivered up to the Argives to save the children of Herakles;[6] his offer is rejected, but Macaria gives herself for Athens:

> "Yea, I pledge me now
> For these, my brother's sake, and mine, to die.
> For treasure trove most fair by loving not
> Life have I found,—with glory to quit life."[7]

And the soul of this sacrifice is in the perfect willing-

[1] *Phœnissæ*, 968, 969, 997, 998, 1009–1014, 1054–1059, 1090–1092.
[2] *Suppliants*, 765–768.
[3] See on this whole subject, Way, vol. ii. Introduction, p. xliv *sq.*
[4] *Hecuba*, 346, 347, 357, 358, 378.
[5] *Ib.* 591, 592.
[6] *Heracleidæ*, 453–455.
[7] *Ib.* 530–534.

ness with which it is made. Renunciation is a law within the heart with the heroines of Euripides, and the offering is consummated within before it is embodied without:

> "I will not perish by the lot's doom, I;
> For then is no free grace: thou, name it not.
> But if ye will accept me, and consent
> To take an eager victim, willingly
> I give my life for these, nowise constrained."[1]

Nor is the unshaken soul of this girl sustained by any glowing hopes. She wishes

> "That nought might be! for if there too
> We mortals who must die shall yet have cares,
> I know not whither one shall turn,—since death
> For sorrows is accounted chiefest balm."[2]

And such absorption into the universal consciousness as Theonoe speaks of,—the philosophically clarified conception of the after-world,—is the attenuated thought that in some of the noblest minds immortality becomes:

> "Albeit the soul
> Of the dead live not, deathless consciousness
> Still hath it when in deathless æther merged."[3]

In the same spirit of renunciation Antigone, smitten with noble madness,[4] finds exile honourable,[5] and resolves to break the lower law that she may keep the higher.[6] Alcestis, the sweetest, noblest woman of them all, freely yields up life to save her husband,[7] conscious that the separation is of divine ordering,[8] and knowing the full value of the sacrifice she makes.[9] No more

[1] *Heracleidæ*, 547–551. [2] *Ib.* 593–596. [3] *Helen*, 1013–1016.
[4] *Phœn.* 1680. [5] *Ib.* 1691, 1692. [6] *Ib.* 1745–1747.
[7] *Alcestis*, 282–289. [8] *Ib.* 297, 298. [9] *Ib.* 301.

than Macaria is she supported by hopes of future bliss:

"Time shall bring healing—but the dead is nought."[1]

The pathos of the sacrifice is not lessened if Alcestis appears in danger of being a martyr by mistake in dying for a man who seems barely worth dying for. It may be true (and certainly Mr. Way[2] seems to make out an unanswerable case for this) that Admetus is the conventional good man of Greece. But it is the part of Euripides often to present us with unconventional goodness, as, *e.g.*, in the spirit of his slaves. And granting that the real theme of the play was not so much "the devotion of Alcestis" as "the reward of virtue," this is altogether subordinate in impression. The thing that, from first to last, stands out before the mind is that a noble woman is dying for a man whom no amount of poetical compliment from Chorus or Deity can prevent appearing an ineffective and poor creature. It is not merely that his father permits him to see how he appears to the cool reason of old age; it is that he has a shrewd suspicion himself that he is not quite a sound man. He is like the Rev. Amos Barton in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, who thought "himself strong, but who did not *feel* himself strong." Pheres thinks he would have done wrong to have died for Admetus; and Admetus is not sure, under all his railing, that his father is mistaken:

"But I, unmeet to live, my doom outrun,
Shall drag out bitter days; I know it now."[3]

[1] *Alcestis*, 381.

[2] *Euripides* in English verse, vol. i. (Appendix) p. 421. But cf. vol. ii. Introduction, p. xliii.

[3] *Alcestis*, 939, 940.

He fears

> ". . . throngs
> Where women gossip; for I shall not bear
> On these companions of my wife to look.
> And if a foe I have, thus shall he scoff:
> 'Lo there who basely liveth—dared not die,
> But whom he wedded gave, a coward's ransom
> And 'scaped from Hades. Count ye him a man?
> He hates his parents tho' himself was loth
> To die!'"[1]

Why should all this be anticipated if Admetus had so completely satisfied the Greek ideal of the good man by his princely hospitality?

In the sacrifice of Iphigeneia it is not personal affection, but love for country that strengthens the soul for its action:

> "Lo, resolved I am to die; and fain am I that this be done
> Gloriously—that I thrust ignoble craven thoughts away!"[2]

The fleet will sail, Phrygia be overthrown, Hellas' homes saved:

> "All this great deliverance I in death shall compass, and my name,
> As of one who gave to Hellas freedom, shall be blessing crowned.
> *Must* I live, that clutching life with desperate hand I should be found?
> For the good of Hellenes didst thou bear me, not for thine alone."[3]

She is born for others. She resigns her body unto Hellas,[4] and prays to be made the land's saviour.[5]

The spirit of sacrifice is the heart of friendship. It

[1] *Alcestis*, 951–959. [2] *Iph. at Aul.* 1375, 1376.
[3] *Ib.* 1383, 1386. [4] *Ib.* 1397. [5] *Ib.* 1421.

is true, things with a semi-cynical air are said of it. Such as:

> "For in adversity the good are friends
> Most true: prosperity hath friends unsought."[1]

But the truth is not more bitter than the Hebrew saying, "The poor is hated even of his neighbour, but the rich hath many friends." But real friendship means partnership in pain. Pylades scorns to consult his own safety apart from his friends'.[2] He must "share the suffering" as he "shared the deed."

In all these instances it is the thoughts, emotions, virtues of free Greeks that the dramatist gives us. But he becomes the spokesman of the class so long mute, and so long considered unworthy of interest or care, the slaves of Greece. Here, if anywhere, the humanitarianism, which has so often gone with an enlargement and freeing of theological thought, expresses itself. For Euripides, as not even for his friend Socrates, the slave is a man. The old slave in *Ion* says:

> "There is but one thing bringeth shame to slaves,
> The name: in all else ne'er a slave is worse
> Than free men, so he bear an upright soul."[3]

And so the messenger in *Helen*:

> "He is base who recks not of his master's weal,
> Rejoicing with him, sorrowing in his pain.
> Still may I be, though I be bondman born,
> Numbered among bondservants noble-souled;
> So may I have, if not the name of free,
> The heart: for better this is than to bear
> On my one head two ills—to nurse base thoughts
> Within, and do in bondage others' hests."[4]

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[1] *Hecuba*, 1226, 1227.
[2] *Orestes*, 1074, 1091–1097.
[3] *Ion*, 854–856.
[4] *Helen*, 726–733.

It has seemed worth while to be minute and detailed in the case of this writer, because he images the time in which most of the work of philosophy with which we have to deal was done. And this as surely as Tennyson and Browning voice the questions of the middle of last century. Between the last-named poet and Euripides there is, indeed, the closest sympathy. There is the same intense humanity, the same interest in "problems," and the same excess, at times, of reflection, of desire to look at a question from every point of view, which means philosophic overpoise to poetry. But in thinking of the milieu in which the teaching of Socrates wrought, no estimate of the contemporary ethical conditions could be even approximately true which did not take into account what Euripides expressed, and what he must have suggested. Within the fixed framework of Greek morality, customs, and faith there was movement in plenty, and the best register in art of that movement is in the plays of Euripides.

# CHAPTER II

## PERSONAL

No character in Greece seems to be better known than Socrates; yet there is a certain paucity and baldness about the mere recital of the facts of his life. He was a native of Alopece, a "parish" close to Athens, and was born in the year 469 B.C. His father was Sophroniscus, a sculptor; his mother was Phænarete, a wise woman. There is no evidence of his father enjoying much success or celebrity in his art. The facts rather seem to point to a modest household and a lowly upbringing. This does not mean exceptional straitness in the boy's training. The ordinary curriculum of a Greek freeman's son would be his. In the *Crito*[1] he makes the laws speak of the education in gymnastics which his father gave him, in obedience to their requirement. He would be made also to commit much poetry to memory, and to familiarise himself with Greek ideals in the concrete as they presented themselves in epic and fable. Later came singing, dancing, playing on the lyre, and recitation, besides the physical culture of the gymnasium. At a later time still, those who were able to do so followed up this school course by attendance on the lectures of philosophers and

[1] *Crito*, 50 D, E.

rhetoricians, who gave instruction in mathematics, astronomy, logic and ethics, and in all matters specially supposed to fit men for participation in public life; but this higher education had not become general in the youth of Socrates. He seems to have been trained to his father's profession, and to have followed it for some time. A group of draped Graces in the Acropolis was said to be from his hands.[1] But his true bent was not art, but philosophy, and he was at length set free for its pursuit. It was Crito, Diogenes Laërtius says,[2] who, out of the admiration which he conceived for the abilities of Socrates, made him leave his workshop and receive instruction, and who continued through life to be his assiduous pupil and benefactor.

How much he was indebted to others for initiation into philosophy is hard to decide. It is said, but on no reliable authority, that he was a disciple of Anaxagoras and Archelaus. Loose inferences were drawn from his own allusions, by authors who, writing long after, had no evidence of great value to adduce. In the *Phædo*,[3] where he speaks of the teaching of Anaxagoras, he does not speak as one who had been a personal disciple, but as a student of the writings of that philosophy. And elsewhere he is represented as jesting with Callias, whom he describes as a person expensively educated in philosophy, while he himself is but a "self-taught tinker."[4] How far he pursued

[1] Diog. Laërt. ii. 19; Pausanias, ix. 35.

[2] Diog. Laërt. ii. 20, 121. Brandis, art. "Socrates," *Dict. of Gr. and Rom. Biog.*, and Zeller, *Socrates* (Eng. trans.), p. 60, note 1, throw doubt on these statements as to his early life.

[3] *Phædo*, 97 B, 98 B, C.

[4] Xen., *Symp.* i. 5 (Dakyns).

his early speculations about natural philosophy, a study with which he professes to have been fascinated when young, we do not know; but that he was a competent mathematician is plain from several testimonies. Xenophon[1] shows that his discouragement of the higher mathematics was not because he was unskilled in the study, but because it was capable of absorbing a man's whole life to the neglect of more useful matters. And in the *Republic*,[2] Plato represents him as dwelling on the advantage of geometrical studies for the cultivation of the love of science for its own sake. We may be sure, in any case, that it was a mind well furnished, and, what is of more consequence, of as nearly absolute originality as it is possible to a man to possess, that he brought to the study of philosophic problems. His own words do not indicate much consciousness of indebtedness to other teachers. When Hermogenes asks him a question about the naturalness or conventionality of names,[3] Socrates answers, "Son of Hipponicus, there is an ancient saying that 'hard is the knowledge of the good,' and the knowledge of names is a great part of knowledge. If I had not been poor, I might have heard the fifty-drachma course of the great Prodicus, which is a complete education in grammar and language,—these are his own words,—and then I should have been at once able to answer your question about the correctness of names. But, indeed, I have only heard the single-drachma course, and therefore I do not know the truth about such matters." This, no doubt, is merely his "chaff"; and whether he really

[1] Xen., *Mem.* IV. vii. 3.
[2] *Repub.* vii. 527.
[3] Cratylus, 384 A, B, C (Jowett).

ever systematically attended the regular instructions of public teachers remains problematic. His method of learning was, no doubt, largely like his method of tuition, informal and unsystematic. But that he did learn something in such free intercourse with those who professed to teach philosophy, as he did from others, remains sure from his own words and from the nature of the case. No man in philosophy is absolutely without father, without mother. If anyone ever was, it was Socrates; but even he speaks of some from whom he received part of his philosophic education, possibly, though not certainly, in the way of regular lectures. His gratitude is not, indeed, always conspicuous. When the discussion runs on the possibility of teaching virtue, and the contradictions of the Sophists on that point, Socrates says: "I am afraid, Meno, that you and I are not good for much, and that Gorgias has been as poor an educator of you as Prodicus of me."[1] In the *Menexenus*[2] he professes himself in music a pupil of Connus, and in rhetoric of Aspasia. But from the *Euthydemus*[3] we learn that, because of his age, the boys laughed at him, and called Connus "grandpapa's master"; and as to his rhetorical studies, we know that, as Meno puts it, he is always making fun of the rhetoricians; and these utterances in character are hardly evidence. The impression he makes is always that of a fresh force. He found the life of the city to be his teacher. His school was Athens. And, further, whatever be the literal history of his course of philosophic instruction, we certainly have in the *Phædo*[4] an ideally true picture of his disappointment with the

[1] *Meno*, 96 D.
[2] *Menex.* 235 E, 236 A.
[3] *Euthyd.* 272 C.
[4] *Phædo*, 96 A *et seq.*

unsatisfying character of the speculations which first drew him, and the experiences in the interpretation of which he found his philosophic call.

"When I was young, Cebes, I had a prodigious desire to know that department of philosophy which is called the investigation of nature; to know the causes of things, and why a thing is, and is created or destroyed, appeared to me to be a lofty profession; and I was always agitating myself with the consideration of questions such as these:—Is the growth of animals the result of some decay which the hot and cold principle contracts, as some have said? Is the blood the element with which we think, or the air, or the fire? Or perhaps nothing of the kind—but the brain may be the originating power of the perceptions of hearing and sight and smell, and memory and opinion may come from them, and science may be based on memory and opinion when they have obtained fixity. And then I went on to examine the corruption of them, and then to the things of heaven and earth, and at last I concluded myself to be utterly and absolutely incapable of these enquiries, as I will satisfactorily prove to you. For I was fascinated by them to such a degree that my eyes grew blind to things which I had seemed to myself, and also to others, to know quite well; I forgot what I had before thought self-evident truths; *e.g.* such a fact as that the growth of man is the result of eating and drinking; for when by the digestion of food flesh is added to flesh and bone to bone, and whenever there is an aggregation of congenial elements, the lesser bulk becomes larger and the small man great. . . .

"Then I heard someone reading, as he said, from a

book of Anaxagoras, that mind was the disposer and cause of all, and I was delighted at this notion, which appeared quite admirable, and I said to myself: If mind is the disposer, mind will dispose all for the best, and put each particular in the best place; and I argued that if anyone desired to find out the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of anything, he must find out what state of being or doing or suffering was best for that thing; and therefore a man had only to consider the best for himself and others, and then he would also know the worse, since the same science comprehended both. And I rejoiced to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the causes of existence such as I desired, and I imagined that he would tell me first whether the earth is flat or round; and, whichever was true, he would proceed to explain the cause and the necessity of this being so, and then he would teach me the nature of the best, and show that this was the best; and if he said that the earth was in the centre, he would further explain that this position was the best, and I should be satisfied with the explanation given, and not want any other sort of cause. And I thought that I would then go on and ask him about the sun and moon and stars, and that he would explain to me their comparative swiftness and their returnings, and various states, active and passive, and how all of them were for the best. For I could not imagine that when he spoke of mind as the disposer of them, he would give any other account of their being as they are, except that this was best; and I thought that when he had explained to me in detail the cause of each and the cause of all, he would go on to explain to me what was best for each, and what

was good for all. These hopes I would not have sold for a large sum of money, and I seized the books, and read them as fast as I could in my eagerness to know the better and the worse.

"What expectations I had formed, and how grievously was I disappointed! As I proceeded, I found my philosopher altogether forsaking mind or any other principle of order, but having recourse to air, and ether, and water, and other eccentricities. I might compare him to a person who began by maintaining generally that mind is the cause of the actions of Socrates, but who, when he endeavoured to explain the causes of my several actions in detail, went on to show that I sit here because my body is made up of bones and muscles; and the bones, as he would say, are hard, and have joints which divide them; and the muscles are elastic, and they cover the bones, which have also a covering or environment of flesh and skin which contains them; and as the bones are lifted at their joints by the contraction or relaxation of the muscles, I am able to bend my limbs, and this is why I am sitting here in a curved posture—that is what he would say; and he would have a similar explanation of my talking to you, which he would attribute to sound and air and hearing, and he would assign ten thousand other causes of the same sort, forgetting to mention the true cause, which is, that the Athenians have thought fit to condemn me, and accordingly I have thought it better and more right to remain here and undergo my sentence; for I am inclined to think that these muscles and bones of mine would have gone off long ago to Megara or Bœotia—by the dog they would, if they had been moved only by their own

idea of what was best, and if I had not chosen the better and nobler part, instead of playing truant and running away, of enduring any punishment which the State inflicts. There is surely a strange confusion of causes and conditions in all this. It may be said, indeed, that without bones and muscles and the other parts of the body I cannot execute my purposes. But to say that I do as I do because of them, and that this is the way in which mind acts, and not from the choice of the best, is a very careless and idle mode of speaking. I wonder that they cannot distinguish the cause from the condition, which the many, feeling about in the dark, are always mistaking and misnaming."

The Platonic colouring of the *Phædo* does not hide the essential truth of this description of his feelings at the outset of his philosophic search. His interests from the first were not really in natural science, but philosophic in the strict sense. And his independence to so great an extent of other minds is doubtless connected with this repulsion from the pursuits of the natural philosophers. He struck out his own path.

When it was that he gave himself up to philosophy, we do not know with any exactness. The restraints of the divine voice, of which, through life, he was at intervals conscious, became at some point absolute, and prevented him occupying himself with the common pursuits of an Athenian citizen. And it can be inferred from the story of Chærephon's visit to the oracle at Delphi, that others had begun to recognise those gifts of introspection and thought which marked him out for a philosophic career before he possessed any "clearness" on the subject himself. It does not appear that the oracular verdict smote anyone but himself

with surprise. And indeed, even after this consciousness of a mission had become clear, we have pictures of him faithfully serving his country when summoned to do so, whether as judge or soldier. The expedition to Potidæa took place in 432. By that time Socrates was thirty-six years of age. Before that, we think, reflection must have claimed him, for he was evidently a marked man among the troops, the astonishment being that a man of his wonted pursuits, a thinker and a student, should manifest himself to be so good a soldier. In the *Symposium*,[1] Alcibiades is made to say that he and Socrates messed together on the expedition to Potidæa, "and I had the opportunity of observing his extraordinary power of sustaining fatigue. His endurance was simply marvellous when, being cut off from our supplies, we were compelled to go without food—on such occasions, which often happen in time of war, he was superior not only to me but to everybody; there was no one to be compared to him. . . . His fortitude in enduring cold was also surprising. There was a severe frost, for the winter in that region is really tremendous, and everybody else either remained indoors, or, if they went out, had on an amazing quantity of clothes, and were well shod, and had their feet swathed in felt and fleeces: in the midst of this Socrates, with his bare feet on the ice and in his ordinary dress, marched better than the other soldiers who had shoes, and they looked daggers at him because he seemed to despise them." He fought also at Delium, and shared in the retreat of the defeated Athenians; and again at Amphipolis, when Brasidas the hero and Cleon the demagogue both fell.

[1] *Symposium*, 219 E, 220 A, B.

These military expeditions in which Socrates participated did not reflect much credit on his country's prowess. The service at Potidæa was a slow blockade of two years, issuing eventually in an Athenian success. Delium was a sore defeat, and Amphipolis a shameful one, marked by panic in the men and cowardice in the general. But the part of Socrates, though only that of a private man, would, we are sure, be played in such a way as to bear out his own words, when, refusing to make any unworthy compliances to save his life, he says, "Strange indeed would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I, who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidæa and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man facing death—if now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death or any other fear; . . . and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death, fancying that I was wise when I was not wise."[1]

And although, in obedience to the conviction that God had summoned him to abstain from voluntary participation in politics, he never entered public life, yet he was neither unfaithful nor timid in the discharge of the civic duties which Athens laid upon her sons. After the victory of Arginusæ, when the generals were put on their trial for neglecting to save the wounded and to recover the bodies of the Athenian dead from the triremes that had been put out of action, and when

[1] *Apology*, 28 E, 29 A.

an illegal proposition was put forward, in a moment of passion, to the effect that all the accused should be condemned or acquitted by a single vote of the assembly without being heard in their defence before sworn jurors, and the senators of the presiding tribe were being overawed by popular feeling, Socrates, who was one of the Prytanes, could be moved by no clamour to depart from his solitary protest against this illegal and morally wrong course.[1] And again, when in the reign of terror at Athens, under the Thirty, Socrates was one of five citizens whom, in accordance with their customary policy of involving others in their criminal acts, the Tyrants ordered to proceed to Salamis to arrest Leon, he declined obedience and went home.[2] He says in the *Apology*: "That government with all its power did not terrify me into doing anything wrong; but when we left the Council-Chamber the other four went over to Salamis, and brought Leon across to Athens; and I went away home: and if the rule of the Thirty had not been destroyed soon afterwards I should very likely have been put to death for what I did then." These were the most noteworthy incidents of his life, so far as it was impinged upon by the politics of his time. He took no voluntary part in public life. He met the claims of the State upon his services by loyal obedience. But where a conflict between civil claims and conscience emerged, he followed the inner light.

Of what we understand by home life neither he nor others of his time knew much. The Greek matron was not the companion of her husband. Her education

[1] *Apol.* 32 A, B, C; Xen., *Mem.* I. i. 17, 18, IV. iv. 2.
[2] *Apol.* 32 (Church); Xen., *Mem.* IV. iv. 3; Diog. Laërt. ii. 24.

fitted her for domestic duties, but not for intellectual comradeship. And when the Athenians of that day sought this in woman, they usually found it in the formation of those irregular relationships, typified by that of Pericles and Aspasia, which were so marked a feature of Greek life. The wife of Socrates, Xanthippe, has had perhaps scant justice done her in history. She was said to have a bitter tongue, and has been generally treated as the type of the untamed shrew. There is something perhaps to be said from her point of view. No doubt Socrates was a trial. He cared nothing for business or anything but his philosophic mission. He seems to have been able to live without following any other avocation. Unless the explanation[1] be true, that the rich Crito supported him, one must suppose that he had a little property, for he took no fees from his disciples. He describes himself at the end of his life as being in great poverty, owing to this devotion of his to philosophy. One suspects that he was not "a good provider," and that Xanthippe needed all her philosophy when he took people unexpectedly home to supper, and sought to quiet her distress by saying, "Be of good cheer; if our friends are sensible people they will take us as they find us; if they are paltry folk, we won't trouble about them."[2] There are many stories and bits of petty gossip about Xanthippe in late authors. Such as that, when on one occasion she had finished her passionate abuse of Socrates by flinging water upon him, he answered: "Did not I remark that Xanthippe was thundering and was going to rain?"[3] Or that other bit of gossip which asserts that Æschines procured

[1] Diog. Laërt. ii. 20, 121. [2] *Ib.* ii. 34. [3] *Ib.* ii. 36.

dialogues written by Socrates from Xanthippe and passed them off as his own,[1] the value of which may be gauged from our knowledge of the general agreement of testimonies that Socrates wrote no dialogues, nor, indeed, anything else, unless the prison exercises of which Plato tells us be supposed to count. Such stories appear about all great or singular characters, almost in parallel streams of idealisation by disciples, or depreciation by pickers-up of "unconsidered trifles," such as some of the later Greek writers. A juster view of a relationship which cannot be regarded as happy is to be gained from considering what the great authorities Plato and Xenophon relate. Xenophon,[2] indeed, in the very passage in which Lamprocles, the eldest son of Socrates, is brought in as complaining that his mother's ill-humour is unendurable, represents Socrates as expostulating with him, and showing him what he has owed to his mother's love and care all through life. Whether her children understood her or not, it would seem plain that Socrates could discern the real affection often hidden by Xanthippe's shrewishness of speech. And although the parting scene in the *Phædo* seems to us repellently cold, the grief on the woman's side at least is evidence of genuine attachment. Socrates himself manifested no deep feeling. His last hours were spent talking with his friends, his wife and children having been dismissed to be readmitted before the end, only to say farewell. There is little more to be said about the matter. The marriage relationships of great men are often infelicitous. The question only seems to engage a bit of their minds. They are like Thales, "when he fell into a well as he was looking up at the

[1] Diog. Laërt. ii. 60.

[2] *Mem.* II. ii.

stars . . . so eager to know what was going on in heaven that he could not see what was before his feet."[1]

The real life of Socrates was that of the thinker and philosophic missionary. By the time he was satirised in *The Clouds* of Aristophanes (424 B.C.) he must have become well known as a philosopher. He was then well on in middle life,—forty-four,—and for how many years he had been engaged in his pursuit we cannot tell. The account he gives in the *Apology*, while it reads as the description of his call, even if it cannot be accepted as historical, does at least imply that by some (of whom Chærephon was a type) he was already recognised as exceptional for wisdom, his own consciousness of ignorance notwithstanding, even before that complete devotion of himself to the examination of his own and other minds which filled his remaining years.[2] Perhaps it would not be far wrong to say that before he was much more than thirty years of age he had found some discerning spirits with whom he held fellowship in philosophy, and was becoming recognised in Athens as a moral thinker. Henceforth for a generation he made reflection and examination of himself and others the business of his life. He was no professional teacher. He received no fees. His pupils were companions, fellow-searchers for truth. He felt himself to be called of God to this work. His bodily wants were few and simple; his mental needs and the needs of those about him he felt to be imperative. To obtain satisfaction for them, and to help others to a similar satisfaction, was for him the most useful work of the time. In the streets and markets, the wrestling

[1] *Theætetus*, 174 A.

[2] *Phædo*, 96 A; cf. Zeller, *Socrates*, pp. 59, 60 n. 3, 61 n. 1.

schools and gymnasia, he found his academy, and in every listening group his pupils. Among all her citizens Athens had no more constant lover than this keen critic of her institutions and her life. "I am a lover of knowledge," he said, "and in the city I can learn from men; but the fields and the trees can teach me nothing."[1] No man was further from the mood expressed in Wordsworth's lines:

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can."

His delights, like Wisdom's, were with the sons of men: men of all sorts and conditions,—mechanics, sculptors, poets, politicians, teachers,—all were of interest to him, and from all he gathered matter for philosophic thought. "He was always in the public eye, for he used to go early in the morning to the public walks and gymnasia; and when the market was full he was to be seen there, and the remainder of the day he was always where he would meet most people."[2] Disclaiming the power to impart a positive body of knowledge to others, he was incessantly on the outlook for those with whom he might in common pursue truth. And with such receptive spirits as he found he kept continually discoursing upon human duties, examining what was pious or impious, good or bad, just or unjust, sane or insane, brave or cowardly. He asked what a State was and what a statesman, what the nature of rule over men and the quality of a governor, and about other matters; and he thought those who understood

[1] *Phædrus*, 230 D. [2] Xen. *Mem.* I. i. 10.

these things were good and noble, and those who knew nothing about them might properly be called slaves.[1]

This kind of life Socrates pursued certainly for at least thirty years, probably longer. And during this time he put the stamp of his thought upon the finest minds among the younger men of Athens. The ingenuous and impressionable inquirer in matters of moral principle or statecraft found a fascination in his society and teaching, which amply compensated for some conversational discomfiture at their first meeting. Greek wit and good fellowship, admiration for personal beauty or dexterity, interest in every phase of life, insatiable appetite for speech,—all were means of attraction to one or other class of his fellow-countrymen. If they continued with him for a little time the spell came upon them. Alcibiades was one out of some few men who, while they felt the greatness of Socrates, never really caught his spirit, who remained misthriven products of the Socratic training, and whose after careers, so harmful to their country, were turned into an argument against the teaching of the man whom they once owned as master. But he made no mistake as to the character of the influence that for a time held him, and that fully yielded to might have made him as prominent in service to Greece as he came to be in injuries. At the words of Socrates, he says,[2] "my heart leaps within me more than that of any Corybantian reveller, and my eyes rain tears when I hear them. And I observe that many others are affected in the same manner. I have heard Pericles and other great orators, and I thought that they spoke well, but I never had any similar feeling; my soul was not

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. i. 16.

[2] *Symp.* 215 D, E, 216 A, B, C.

stirred by them, nor was I angry at the thought of my own slavish state. But this Marsyas has often brought me to such a pass that I have felt as if I could hardly endure the life which I am leading (this, Socrates, you will admit); and I am conscious that if I did not shut my ears against him, and fly as from the voice of the siren, my fate would be like that of others,—he would transfix me, and I should grow old sitting at his feet. For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my own soul, and busying myself with the concerns of the Athenians; therefore I hold my ears, and tear myself away from him. And he is the only person who ever made me ashamed, which you might think not to be in my nature, and there is no one else who does the same. For I know that I cannot answer him or say that I ought not to do as he bids, but when I leave his presence the love of popularity gets the better of me. And therefore I run away and fly from him, and when I see him I am ashamed of what I have confessed to him. Many a time have I wished that he were dead, and yet I know that I should be much more sorry than glad, if he were to die, so that I am at my wits' end."

But the course of life Socrates pursued made him enemies as well as friends.[1] Fascinated by the ideal of a true knowledge and deprecating the pretence of its possession, his examination of all assumptions was searching and merciless. Self-conceit was pierced, and imaginary mental riches disappeared. Not all men could endure this. Nor could others understand the incessant raising of questions about what they con-

[1] *Apol.* 21–23. Cf. remarks of E. Von Lesaulx, *Des Socrates Leben, Lehre und Tod*, p. 62.

sidered to be matters of common understanding. It was felt to be unsettling. Not understanding the aim of the preacher,—to give a rational basis to ethics,—his inquiries were considered simply an addition to the sum of dissolving and revolutionary influences in the State. Free expressions of criticism, directed against the invocation of chance in the Athenian democracy, in the method of filling offices by lot, were distorted into seditious utterances, and harmless quotations from the poets were said to have been repeated as slanders of the sovereign people. The tendency, moreover, of the Socratic political teaching to commit affairs to an aristocracy of intellect, was more freely interpreted as a support of oligarchical principles,—a thing hateful to a democracy that had suffered much at the hands of aristocratic revolutionists. A combination of influences was at work, in fact, all making against the safety of the philosopher, with the result that, in 399 B.C., he was indicted as an irreligious man, a corrupter of youth, and an innovator in worship. Anytus, the chief actor, was an active politician: he had shown great zeal on the democratic side in the time of the oligarchical troubles, and had acquired influence with the Athenians. He is brought before us in the *Meno* as showing great hostility to sophistical teaching, and displaying also much irritation[1] at the remarks of Socrates, which seem to imply the impossibility of teaching virtue, illustrating this from the cases of distinguished Athenians whose sons were commonplace persons. And in the closing words of the dialogue, Socrates seems to display some apprehension on account of his veiled threats. Meletus

[1] *Meno*, 94 E.

was an unsuccessful dramatist. His character comes down to us painted by enemies, it is true, but he seems to have been a poor creature. It is hinted in the *Apology*[1] that he was incited to action by resentment at the free Socratic criticism of the poets. Of Lycon we know nothing but his participation in this bad business.

As this must be reverted to again later on, it is sufficient here to say that the case came on for trial before a large popular jury; that, in accordance with custom, the accusers made their speeches, then the accused replied in a speech, the thought, at anyrate, of which has been preserved for us in the *Apology*; that the jury then deliberated, and found Socrates guilty, by a narrow majority: the prosecutor then proposed death as the penalty; the accused, by Athenian practice, was permitted to propose an alternative. Socrates, after protesting that what he really felt himself to deserve was public maintenance in the Prytaneum,—a reward reserved for Olympic victors and others whom the State delighted to honour,—consented, in consultation with his friends apparently, to propose a fine of thirty minæ. Irritated by his independent attitude, many of those who at first had voted for his acquittal now gave their votes for his death; and, after again addressing himself to the jurors, he was conducted to prison. Owing to a peculiar Athenian custom, commemorative of a deliverance wrought by Theseus in legendary days from the terrible tribute exacted by the Minotaur of Crete, which custom decreed the sending of a periodic sacred embassy to Delos, and, further, that during the days occupied in the complete voyage no

[1] *Apol.* 23 E.

public execution should take place at Athens, an interval of thirty days elapsed between the verdict and the execution. This interval was filled with intercourse with attached friends, discussions on immortality, and poetic exercises. Unfortunately we are left in some uncertainty as to much that is handed down to us as uttered by Socrates during this period; or rather, we are sure that much in the *Phædo* could not have been uttered by him, for reasonings on immortality are there made to hinge on doctrines only developed by his disciple Plato. In the *Crito* we have what nothing hinders us from accepting as a true account of the refusal of Socrates to avail himself of the help of his friends to effect his escape, and his determination to abide his fate rather than break the law. In the end of the *Phædo* we have the story of his death: the dismissal of the weeping women and children, the interchange of courtesies with his gaoler, the farewell to his friends, the last charge to Crito to sacrifice a cock to Æsculapius the Healer, in thankfulness for deliverance from the sickness of life into the health of immortality, and the calm of the last act.

# CHAPTER III

## PRE-SOCRATIC REFLECTION AS INFLUENCING ETHICS

When Socrates began his work, Greek reflection had already a considerable history. It is true that at first, and for some time, the eye of philosophy was on the world. Thought was directed to the outward. It had not become strictly self-conscious. Out of the manifold appearances presented to sense it was labouring to discover reality. Dissatisfied with mythological statements referring phenomena to the arbitrary and capricious actings of quasi-human deities, early thinkers tried to find some rational clue that would guide thought out of the maze of appearances in which it was lost, and would take it to a point from which could be seen the principle by which they could be arranged, the law which they obeyed. The greatness of the pioneers of thought is not to be estimated by their occasional forecasts of explanations, for the establishment of which ages of investigation were necessary, but by their faith in the rationality of the world. Until the belief was overthrown that anything might be expected to occur at any time, and it was asserted that there was an order of things, an inherent reason, no movement of mind was possible. "An early Greek

philosopher," says Grote, "found nothing around him to stimulate or assist the effort" (after a rational explanation of things), "and much to obstruct it. He found Nature disguised under a diversified and omnipresent Polytheistic agency. It is perfectly true (as Aristotle remarks) that Hesiod and the other theological poets, who referred everything to the generation and agency of the Gods, thought only of what was plausible to themselves, without inquiring whether it would appear equally plausible to their successors. . . . The contemporary public . . . know no other way of conceiving Nature than under this religious and poetical view, as an aggregate of manifestations by divine personal agents, upon whose volition—sometimes signified beforehand by obscure warnings intelligible to the privileged interpreters, but often inscrutable—the turn of events depended."[1] "First that which is natural" was the order followed by the speculations of those who could not rest content with tradition. They simply turned away from explanations felt to be puerile, and without initiating, at first, a polemic of destructive reasoning, ignored the polytheistic theology in their search for a rational scheme of the natural order.

By the middle of the seventh century B.C., in the prosperous settlements of Asiatic Greece, the new spirit of inquiry began to show itself. Wealth had brought leisure, contact with other types of civilisation had contributed to the enrichment of science, and the need and opportunity for intellectual expansion met.[2] Thales (b. 640 B.C.) stands at the

[1] Grote, *Plato and Companions of Socrates*, i. 89, 90.
[2] Windelband, *Hist. Anc. Phil.* p. 16 *sq.*

head of those who tried to reach by reflection along the lines of "Dynamical Physicism," as it has been called,—the physical substance which, by transmutations and permutations, might be conceived as the essence of all things in the world. And the answer that he gave was that all things in the world were made of water. How he reached his way to this conclusion we do not know. We have none of his writings; we do not certainly know whether he left any. And it is only conjecture that he was led by study of the facts of nutrition and reproduction in animal life,[1] or by the ancient cosmogonies,[2] or by the ever-present importance of the sea in the lives of his people,[3] to fasten on the element of water as the basis of physical being. Professor Mayor's suggestion is, that it was probably "also from the fact that water supplies the most obvious example of the transmutation of matter under its three forms—solid, fluid, and gaseous."[4] Thales was followed by Anaximander (b. 610 B.C.), whose aim also was to reach the primary matter of the world, but whose notion of which appears at first more metaphysical than physical—that is, he sought the origin of all things in the indeterminate and infinite. This seems at first a deviation from the physical explanations initiated by Thales, in so far as no matter to which experience introduces us is boundless.[5] It is not certain, however, that the infinity of which he conceives is more than a corporeal richness that meets all the demands upon it of life and growth, change and decay. Anaximander

[1] Arist., *Meta.* i. 3; 983*b*, 20–27.
[2] *Ib.*
[3] Windelband, *Hist. Anc. Phil.* p. 37.
[4] Mayor, *Anc. Phil.* p. 3.
[5] Windelband, p. 39.

had evidently great talent for natural science. Gomperz[1] says: "We may fairly look on Anaximander as the author of the natural philosophy of Greece, and consequently of the Occident." The point about his method is that it scientifically corrects the sense judgments by a principle of reason. Anaximenes (fl. *c.* 520 B.C.) kept without ambiguity within the range of physical elements in his search for what is primary. He assumed this primary substance to be air, from which, by processes of condensation and rarefaction, all things come. All the Ionian physical school were hylozoists, *i.e.* matter to them had in itself life and moving power, and in finding the primary matter in air Anaximenes chose the substance apparently finest and most clearly possessing these qualities.

After the first three names of Ionic philosophers, absolutely exact agreement ceases amongst historians of philosophy as to the order in which the names should be treated according to the succession in thought. The order followed here is that adopted by Burnet in his *Early Greek Philosophy*. The reasons, substantial and convincing, cannot be detailed. Following upon the work of the Ionic thinkers mentioned, came something of the nature of a religious reaction which is connected with the name of Pythagoras (fl. 532 B.C.). Zeller says[2] Pythagoras "desired to effect, chiefly by the aid of religion, a reform of the moral life." The connection of this reform with scientific theory, which Zeller goes on to speak of, is a much more speculative matter. Aristotle scarcely speaks of Pythagoras, but of

[1] *Greek Thinkers*, i. 40 (trans. Magnus).
[2] *Pre-Socratic Phil.* i. 358 (Eng. trans.).

those[1] who are called Pythagoreans, in his references to the philosophy of the school. Pythagoras himself was a religious reformer, full of moral earnestness, who worked, through the machinery of politics and by means of the fraternal communities he established, to infuse into Greek moral life the strenuousness which new influences, such as the great but precarious affluence of Ionia and the speculations of its thinkers were making so essential; but what his special opinions were is a difficult question to answer. He taught transmigration and inculcated abstemiousness, his early disciples refraining in general from animal food and beans. In the regulations of his associated followers there was a mixture of ethical precepts and positive rules of a ceremonial character, but the details of prescription are not historical but projections into the past of a later system. In the religious associations of the Greeks there was a general aim of cultivating those elements of religion that appealed to the need felt of purification and the desire for the care of the Gods.[2] There were mystic elements in the ceremonies of initiation and suggestions of another life. Professor Burnet thinks that the scientific theory of Pythagoras was dualistic,[3] and that he held that the "air" of Anaximenes' theory "was identical with the space which the geometer studied, and thought of things as made of space, bounded in various ways."[4]

The opposition to the explanations of poetical theology implied in the Ionian speculations was emphasized by Xenophanes of Colophon (b. 569 B.C.), whose whole attitude to the polytheistic creed was polemic and

[1] Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 98, n. 35.
[2] *Ib.* pp. 85–87. [3] *Ib.* p. 107. [4] *Ib.* p. 108.

reforming.[1] He was not only dissatisfied with the popular creed, but revolted by it. He said:

"One is God, supreme midst Gods and men, not like in body to mortal nor yet in mind all eye, all mind all ear."[2]

"Homer and Hesiod attributed to the Gods all things which are disreputable and worthy of blame when done by men; and they told of them many lawless deeds, stealing, adultery, and deception of each other.[3]

"But if cattle or lions had hands so as to paint with their hands and produce works of art as men do, they would paint their Gods and give them bodies in form like their own; horses like horses, cattle like cattle."[4]

His strictly philosophical theories seem to have been regarded by himself as of less importance than his assault on a false theology, and not to have been consistently developed. He thinks, in line with his predecessors in seeking a physical basis of existence, that "all things come from earth and return to earth,"[5] and again that "earth and water are all things that came into being and grow."[6] But it is God who "without effort sets all things in motion by mind and thought."[7] Aristotle apparently[8] does not think that Xenophanes had a clear conception of unity, whether of reason or matter, for he says: "He did not make anything clear, nor did he seem to get at the nature of either of

[1] Windelband, *Hist. Anc. Phil.* p. 46.
[2] Mullach, *Frag. Græc. Phil.* i. 101.
[3] *Ib.* p. 102 (Fairbanks, pp. 68, 69).
[4] *Ib.* p. 102 (Fairbanks, pp. 66–67).
[5] *Ib.* pp. 102, 8.
[6] *Ib.* pp. 102, 10.
[7] *Ib.* pp. 101, 3.
[8] *Meta.* i. 5; 986*b*, 22.

these things, but looking up into the broad heavens he said, 'The unity is God.'" The fact is, there were two elements in his thought not unified. His impulse to rationalise the current creed leads him in the direction of a unity that is pantheistic. Out of this divine unity, in itself unchangeable[1] and immoveable,[2] everything must proceed. There is here a deadlock. The primary principle cannot be both unchangeable and changed into all the variety of existing things. There remains this inner contradiction. It almost seems uncertain sometimes whether the unity is finally spiritual or material, did close examination not show that, rightly understood, all the early philosophies are material. He treats as real the world of sense, and develops crude theories in natural philosophy; and along with this asserts an unchangeable, universal being, the source of all life and movement; and the more he emphasizes this divine unchanging unity, the more unreal becomes the world of objects and events which he still treats as real.

With Heraclitus (fl. 504 B.C.) it was the transformation of one ethereal substance into many forms that produced the world of variety, and he called this cosmic principle fire; but the thing emphasized in his scheme was not the substance, but its changes.[3] Nothing was permanent. All was an eternal flux. It is the conception of a continual becoming throughout the universe that he presents. All things pass into their opposites, or are constituted by the union of opposites. The only permanency seen amid the flow is the law of change. This dominant principle he calls in poetical language "War, the Father of all." It is supreme. It is reason.

[1] Diels, *Doxog. Græc.* p. 565.
[2] Mullach, p. 101, 4.
[3] Mayor, *Anc. Phil.* p. 4.

It is Deity. Nothing sense can grasp carries us to a permanent substance. Nothing strictly *is*. Things only become. The ultimate is a principle of motion which he names from its closest analogy in the world of sense—fire. "Fire is the ἀρχή, but not as a stuff identical with itself in all its changes, but rather as the ever uniform process itself, in which all things rise and pass away."[1] He says:

"This order, the same for all things, no one of Gods or men has made; but it always was, and is, and ever shall be, an ever-living fire, kindling according to fixed measure and extinguished according to fixed measure."[2] He is quoted by Aristotle as saying that "the first principle is soul, as it were a fiery exhalation of which all other things consist." The ethereal fire is also God. He identifies it with the world-all.[3] The later interpretation of his teaching is entirely against the spiritualising of it into a series of metaphorical statements, and he is held to be in the strict line of Ionic native philosophy.[4]

Parmenides (b. *c.* 515 B.C.) taught that the universe is a universe of eternal, homogeneous matter, with no empty space at all, subject neither to motion nor change of any kind. That which can be thought is Being and this is body.[5] Nothing else can be thought, and the inconceivable does not exist.[6] There is neither in it

[1] Windelband, *Hist. Anc. Phil.* p. 52.

[2] *Frag.* 20, Fairbanks' *First Phil. of Greece*, pp. 28–29; *ib.* p. 57; *De Anima*, i. 2; 405*a*, 25.

[3] *Ueberweg Hist. Phil.* i. 38, 41.

[4] Windelband, *op. cit.* p. 53; Burnet, *Early Greek Phil.* p. 169; Diels, *Doxog. Græc.* pp. 475, 558; Fairbanks, p. 60.

[5] Burnet, pp. 13, 190.

[6] *Ib.* 191; Windelband, p. 61.

plurality nor qualitative difference. It knows no beginning and no end. It is limited, "Complete on every side, equally poised from the centre in every direction, like the mass of a rounded sphere."[1] "It is the same thing that can be thought, and for the sake of which the thought exists; for you cannot find thought without something that is, to which it is betrothed."[2] The senses lead us to illusion. We must gain reality by thought, and we reach thus the unchangeable fulness of the universe with no room for growth or decay or change of any kind. He says: "Nor let habit force thee to cast a wandering eye upon this devious track (of common opinion), or to turn thither thy resounding ear or thy tongue; but do thou judge the subtle refutation of their discourse uttered by me."[3]

A second portion of the poem in which Parmenides conveys his philosophy contains theories variously interpreted as a portion of his own philosophic creed held inconsistently with the foregoing reasoned view,[4] or given out as a concession to popular prejudice and uninstructed opinion,[5] or as a statement of Pythagorean principle held forth as a negative example.[6]

It is quite clear that Parmenides puts forth the views of the second portion of his poem as having no truth at all.[7] He is showing his learner what are the "opinions of mortals," the "arrangement as it seems to man," "men's opinions," who "go astray from the

[1] ll. 102–104 (trans. Burnet, p. 187).
[2] *Ib.* v. 94 f., pp. 186, 187.
[3] *Ib.* v. 55 f., p. 185.
[4] Windelband, p. 63.
[5] Mayor, *Anc. Phil.* p. 16.
[6] Burnet, p. 196 *et seq.*
[7] *Ib.* p. 195.

truth." They stand in no relation save of opposition to his clearly enunciated theory.[1]

Empedocles (b. *c.* 500 B.C.) was a reconciler. To obtain from the eternally self-identical Being of Parmenides, excluding motion and change of every kind, the appearances of the world of sense, as to which the help of the witness of sense must be accepted, he postulated four everlasting elements, water, air, fire, and earth, three of which appear in the systems of previous thinkers. Upon these four elements, existing in a mixed mass, two other substances,[2] poetically named Hatred and Love, impinge by necessity as moving powers, and through the continuous separating and combining processes thus set up all existences and experiences are accounted for. The predominance of the severing or uniting power is decided by the stage attained in the slowly moving cycles of the world.

When Love has gained complete sway, all things rest in the perfect sphere only to be dissolved again by strife and to begin the process of formation and decay anew.[3] The human soul is a mixture of both powers, and, in obedience to the principle that only like things can know each other, can know those things the elements of which it possesses in itself.[4] All living things are composed of elements united by Love and dissolved by Hate. Plants, as to which he affirms sex and sensation, are combinations of earth and water and fire. The animals that were originated when Strife ruled were originated in separate parts,—then, as organised, but

[1] Cf. Gomperz, pp. 180 f., for opposite view.

[2] *Frag.* ll. 79, 80, 87, quoted by Burnet, 246, to show that corporeal substances are meant.

[3] Mayor, p. 17, *Frag.* ll. 65 *sq.*

[4] *Ib.* 17.

often monstrous wholes. Some, however, were adapted for survival. Now, the principle of Unity is decaying and Separation increasing in power. The creatures originated early in this period were without sex or distinctness of species, but these are now clearly marked. Scientific theories of growth and nutrition—respiration, hearing, vision, perception generally, sleep and death—were advanced. In perception, effluences from the objects without entered the organs of sense through the pores. Perception was not distinguished from thought, and was supposed to reside in the blood. All things had a share in thought. Our knowledge was a matter decided by the constitution of the elements of our body.[1]

Theologically, Empedocles seems to have combined as many differing beliefs as in physics. He speaks of Gods "composed of elements" as men are, and subject like them, after a longer time, to death. He speaks of the divinity of the orb of matter, and of the elements which compose it; and of dæmons doomed to inhabit mortal bodies for ages as an atonement for sin. And he asserts that there is a deity who is more than these, "sacred and ineffable mind."[2] What was the ethical value of his doctrine of transmigration is hard to say. He was himself, he said, one of the dæmons atoning by an incarnation for former offences. But if a moral explanation is sought of all the processes of metempsychosis, we can only grasp it by getting into the range of ideas where kinship to animals[3] and the

[1] Cf. Burnet, pp. 256–268, for exposition.

[2] *Hist. Phil. Græc.*, Ritter et Preller, 180 (l. 344 f.). Fairbanks, p. 200.

[3] Burnet, pp. 100 f. and 270 (and *Frag.* v. 430 f.); Grote, *Plato*, i. pp. 9, 48.

confusion of soul and sense seem natural. Empedocles had been by his own assertion a bush and a bird and a fish. It seems eviscerating some statements as to transmigration[1] of meaning to say that all Empedocles' "needs would be amply provided for by the reappearance of the same corporeal elements in different combinations." What he needs is that metempsychosis should have a moral interpretation. There is something that offends and suffers, and in the consciousness of this endures thorough changes. It is quite immaterial whether this be held with a conception of the distinctness of soul and body or not. There is an identity that abides; and if all things participate in thought, to be a bush and a bird is no check to its persistence.

Anaxagoras (b. *c.* 500 B.C.) is the writer who was approached by Socrates with such eager expectation, only to be left in disappointment because of the inconsistent application of the idea of Mind in his philosophy. His system was a mediating one.

The mass of matter can neither know increment nor loss. It remains unchangeable.[2] "Nothing comes into being nor yet does anything perish, but there is a mixture and separation of things that are."[3] He does not treat motion as impossible and change as deceptive; but sets himself to account for these by combination and division. "Wherefore they say that everything was mixed in everything, because they saw everything arising out of everything."[4] What Empedocles had treated as elements—earth, water, air, and fire—were to Anaxagoras compounds. The substances

[1] *Frag.* l. 369 *et seq.*, Ritter et Preller, 181.
[2] *Frag.* 14 (Fairbanks), p. 239.
[3] *Frag.* 17.
[4] Arist., *Phys.* i. 4; 187, 1, 2*b*.

that make up the unchangeable quantity of being are composed of seeds which contain in themselves all the original opposite qualities; they are rare, dense, warm, cold, light, dark, dry, moist in various proportions; and according to the predominant quality is the character of the thing. Our senses give us a partial knowledge of things, but cannot detect the qualities opposite to the apparent nature, when these qualities are present only in minute proportions. These qualities, Burnet shows, are called "things,"[1] and are present in everything small and great. The seeds of all the matter in the world are composed of the same elements—the original opposites of the Nature philosophers—but in different proportions. And from the proportion comes the quality that classifies substances. Hence, so understood, all the particles of a particular substance are homogeneous with the whole mass. And, in the same way, all the particles of the different substances differ from each other only in the proportions of their combinations and not in the ultimate constituents.

The beginning of all motion, the principle of order and life, is Nous. We can render this Mind, but we have not for all that reached a truly spiritual conception. It is something unmixed, extended, tenuous, the cause of motion and life and all-knowing.[2] It is the rational order of things, without being pure intelligence. When life is present there it is, but it cannot manifest itself in all things alike because of the imperfection of the corporeal instrument.[3]

The work of Pythagoras as the agent of a religious reaction accompanied by moral reform is separable

[1] *Early Greek Phil.* pp. 287, 288. [2] *Frag.* 6, 7.
[3] Arist., *Part. Anim.* iv. 10; 687*a*, 7 (Ritter et Preller, 160*b*).

from the philosophic developments, under the name of Pythagoreanism. An activity that was monastic and political is the prominent thing in the one case; in the other, a speculative system so extraordinary that parts of it seem intractable to a rational interpretation. The secret Pythagoreanism has to yield, then, is that the world is made of numbers. These numbers were not, however, abstractions. No more than other thinkers before the Sophists had the Pythagoreans gained the immaterial in thought. They did not mean to posit an abstraction as the foundation of all things. They meant that numbers were in their scheme of thought what to the earlier philosophers, seeking for the primary matter, water, air, or fire, was,—the physical basis of things. Referring to their arithmetical and mathematical studies, Aristotle says: "And being brought up in them they thought that the first principles of these were the first principles of all things.[1] . . . And, further, discerning in numbers the conditions and reasons of harmonies also; since, moreover, other things seemed to be like numbers in their entire nature, and numbers were the first of every nature, they assumed that the elements of numbers were the elements of all things, and that the whole heavens were harmony and number."[2] These numbers were not separated from sensible things: "The Pythagoreans say that there is but one Number, the mathematical; but things of sense are not separated from this, for they are composed of it."[3] Their numbers were not conceived of as severed from things that can be seen and touched. They are not to be con-

[1] *Meta.* i. 5; 985*b*, 23. Fairbanks, p. 136.
[2] *Ib.* i. 5; 985*b*, 31. Fairbanks, p. 137.
[3] *Ib.* xii. 6; 1080*b*, 16. Fairbanks, p. 142.

founded with a law of development or an inner harmony of things. Yet there was a way of speaking about them which seemed to separate them from substances: "The Pythagoreans, however, while they in similar manner assume two first principles, add this which is peculiar to themselves: that they do not think that the Finite and the Infinite and the One are certain other things by nature, such as fire or earth or any other such thing, but the Infinite itself and Unity itself are the essence of the things of which they are predicated, and so they make Number the essence of all things."[1] The Monad, however, which begets Limit, shown in the odd numbers, and by union of which with the even numbers flowing from the Dyad each individual thing arises, is spatial limit, and that with which it unites is the Unlimited.[2] The identification of the Unlimited with air and the void, and of Limit with border and measure of concrete realities, completed the physical character of the Pythagorean theory. "And the Pythagoreans say that there is a void, and that it enters into the heaven itself from the infinite air, as though it—the heaven—were breathing; and this void defines the nature of things, inasmuch as it is a certain separation and definition of things that lie together; and this is true first in the case of numbers, for the void defines the nature of these."[3]

In the ordinary expositions of the Pythagorean doctrine of numbers the theory appears largely as an unexplained eccentricity of the human mind, or its historical character is departed from, and it is represented as the statement of a law of proportion and

[1] Arist., *Meta.* i. 5; 987*a*, 9. [2] Mayor, p. 11; Burnet, p. 310.
[3] Arist., *Phys.* iv. 6; 213*b*, 22 (Ritter et Preller, 75*a*). Fairbanks, p. 134.

harmony in nature. Professor Burnet's exposition, which holds the spatial character of the numbers, is followed here. They are really parts of the Unlimited, *i.e.* of Space (which is not mere emptiness, but a material conception), separated off by union with the principle of Limit. One thus is equal to a point, two means a line, three a plane, and so with higher numbers and many planed figures. "The theory that things are numbers then comes simply to this, that things are built up of geometrical figures, that they are portions of space limited in a variety of ways." The point of the Pythagoreans is not a mathematical point without magnitude, but the unit of space, the line has breadth and the plane depth.[1] It is not an abstract and ideal system, but something dealing with quantities and shapes of things.[2]

There were multitudes of other applications of the doctrine of a fantastic and capricious nature; not only concrete objects, but events of life and moral qualities were capable of numerical definition. Justice was the first square, four; marriage, five; opportunity, seven. One was the central fire with ten spheres dancing round it, on the outside that of the fixed stars, then within this the five planets, then sun, moon, earth, and counter earth—the last between the earth and the central fire, shutting off its direct light from us, and only allowing the reflection of it by the sun to reach us.[3] This conception of the counter earth, apparently for the purpose of securing numerical symmetry in the cosmology, appears an extraordinary instance of intellectual levity in the scheme, and raises questions as to the worth of

[1] Burnet, pp. 312–314; cf. note, p. 315.
[2] Cf. Benn, *Gk. Phil.* i. 35.
[3] Mayor, p. 11.

effort to grasp theories so framed. "And they assume yet another earth opposite this, which they call the counter earth, *not seeking reasons and causes for phenomena, but stretching phenomena to meet certain assumptions and opinions of theirs* and attempting to arrange them in a system." [1] This fitting of facts into the mould of system is also alluded to in the words: "And where there was a slight misfit, some gentle pressure would be applied for the sake of rendering their theory a homogeneous whole" [2] (lit. "and if there was any falling short anywhere they were most eager that the whole system should be connected with these (exceptional facts))."

On the other hand, the Pythagorean astronomy has been justly described as "one of the most original and brilliant creations of the Greek intellect." [3] Its later developments were fruitful. Ecphantus taught the rotation of the earth on its own axis. The combination of the movements of the planets Mercury and Venus with the Sun's first emerged. Guesses were made at the relative proportions of sun and earth; and there was approximation, to be consummated later, to the heliocentric astronomy. Mayor says, speaking of the Pythagorean contraries: "These mystical extravagances appear to have been the necessary introduction to the sciences of Arithmetic and Geometry, just as Astrology and Alchemy were the introduction to Astronomy and Chemistry. Indeed, we find that men like Copernicus and Kepler were to some extent influenced and guided in their investigations by the ideas of Pythagoras." [4]

[1] Arist., *Meta.* ii. 13; 293*a*, 19.
[2] *Ib.* i. 5; 986*a*, 6 (Gomperz' rendering).
[3] Gomperz, p. 111.
[4] Mayor, *Hist. Anc. Phil.* p. 12.

Zeno of Elea (b. *c.* 490 B.C.) set himself to refute arguments against the conclusions of Parmenides, by reasonings framed to show the absurdities logically deducible less from current beliefs than from Pythagorean theories.[1] The admission of multiplicity of phenomena issued in contradictions. From the infinite divisibility of space and time he argued the impossibility of motion. Benn summarises his reasonings thus: "A whole composed of parts and divisible *ad infinitum* must be either infinitely great or infinitely little; infinitely great if its parts have magnitude, infinitely little if they have not. A moving body can never come to the end of a given line, for it must traverse half the line, then half the remainder, and so on for ever." [2] These reasonings were not mere captious argumentation, but the statement of real difficulties involved in the acceptance of the unitary theory of space and time. They involve questions at the basis of metaphysics, only successfully to be approached by later mathematical methods.[3]

Melissus of Samos (fl. 440 B.C.) laboured, not by showing the contradictions to which an opposite assumption led, but directly [4] to show the truth of the doctrine of space-filling being. Space was infinite, and was wholly occupied by reality, which had always existed and would continue to exist without change. When he has asserted all this about the Eleatic Unity, it is held by some interpreters that he still teaches inconsistently the incorporeality of being.[5] It seems more likely, on the other hand, that the true view is that the words relied on to establish this constitute

[1] Burnet, p. 327 f.
[2] Benn, *The Greek Philosophers*, p. i, 20.
[3] Windelband, p. 67.
[4] *Ib.* p. 59.
[5] Gomperz, p. 190.

part of a conditional argument, and are not to be taken as stating immateriality.[1]

Leucippus was the originator of the atomic theory, better known in the more fully developed form given to it by Democritus. It is not known when he was born or when he died, or whether he wrote anything or not. He is taken to be somewhat earlier[2] than Democritus (b. 460 B.C.) "He assumed innumerable and ever-moving elements, namely, the atoms. And he made their forms infinite in number, since there was no reason why they should be of one kind rather than another, and because he saw that there was unceasing becoming and change in things. He held, further, that *what is*" (primary matter) "is no more real than *what is not*" (empty space), "and that both are alike causes of the things that come into being; for he laid down that the substance of the atoms was compact and full, and he called them *what is*, while they moved in the void which he called *what is not*, but affirmed to be just as real as *what is*."[3] The theory was a great effort to do justice to the testimony of the senses and to philosophic thought. Parmenides would have nothing but the one immoveable reality, the homogeneous sphere. Unfilled space was unreal to him, but he had not dealt with the problem of the "beyond." Empty space was non-being. This doctrine had led to pluralism to make motion and change possible. The elements of Empedocles, the homogeneous fragments of Anaxagoras, the spatial units of the Pythagoreans, were all put forward in the same interest. But the

[1] Burnet, pp. 344, 345.

[2] Gomperz, i. 317.

[3] Theophr., *Physic. Opin. in Doxog. Græc.* 483, 16 (trans. Burnet), p. 353.

criticism of Zeno had found joints in the armour of such reasonings. Starting from infinite divisibility,[1] he had shown the contradictions in which Pythagoreanism was involved. Then came Melissus, who saw the necessity of spatial infinitude for the material One of Parmenides, if unity was to be preserved. Limitation involved multiplicity. The theory of Leucippus denied infinite divisibility, assumed in Zeno's reasonings, and postulated atoms each as ultimately unchangeable as the One of Parmenides. And going back to his denial of empty space, Leucippus affirmed its existence. Without it motion was impossible. But sense testified to things coming into being, to their passing away, and to their multiplicity. The "reality" of the void that made change possible was different to the "reality" of the material One, but it existed. A new conception was being grasped by thought. Space not material in character, not body-filled, was being dealt with. The Atoms were "what is," and the void in which they moved was "what is not," each assertion understood in the sense conditioned by previous thought. Incorporeal reality was asserted as strongly as corporeal.[2] The atoms, again, were incapable of division, as there were in them no interstices enclosing void; they were qualitatively alike, but differed in form, position, and arrangement.[3] By the attraction of similar things for each other, bodies gather in the void, and "innumerable worlds" are formed from the collision and adhesion to each other of like atoms.[4]

[1] Burnet, p. 355. [2] Ritter et Preller, 194; Burnet, 357.
[3] Theophr., *Physic. Opin. Fr.* 8 (trans. Burnet, p. 353); Arist., *Meta.* i. 4; 985*b*, 4.
[4] Hippol., *Réf.* i. 12. 2; Diels, *Doxog. Græc.* p. 564; Burnet, 358.

Diogenes of Apollonia was an eclectic of encyclopædic knowledge, who endeavoured to unite Anaxagoras' principle of Mind with the primary Air of Anaximenes. Air possessed intelligence,[1] it was the soul and mind of animals and men.[2] Rarefied and become fiery, it produced the sun.[3] And again he speaks of sun and heavenly bodies as pumice-like, with pores that the fire flows through.

Archelaus was the successor of Anaxagoras in the school of Lampsacus. Air with him represented the original mixture of the "seeds" of Anaxagoras. It was also the seat of mind. But mind was not the world-maker, though air and mind were God.[4] He was said to be the teacher of Socrates.

There was neither originality nor consistency in these writers. With all their knowledge and scientific interest, philosophically speaking, they were simply engaged in compounding earlier ideas. There was much progress in knowledge without movement in thought. The conclusion of the period, in which the explanation of things was sought in direct examination of and speculation upon a world naïvely apprehended, was reached. The question of knowledge was to be raised. The interest was moving from the world to man.

The dividing line between Leucippus and Democritus, whom most historians treat together,[5] Burnet thinks must be drawn where the new questions as to our power of knowing emerge.[6] Democritus is on the

[1] *Frag.* 4, Mullach, i. 254. [2] *Frag.* 5, *ib.* 254.
[3] Ritter et Preller, 215 ; Plut., *Strom.* 12 ; Burnet, 363.
[4] Burnet, 361 ; *Aet.* i. 7. 14 ; Diels, p. 302.
[5] Zeller, *Pre-Soc. Phil.* ii. 207 (Eng. trans.).
[6] Burnet, *Intdn.* p. 1 n. 1, p. 358.

hither side of this line, Leucippus on the farther. "The first in time of the subjective philosophers is Democritus. . . . The philosophy of Democritus marks an advance on that of Protagoras."[1] Democritus (b. 460 B.C.) was a contemporary of Socrates, and in his time questions of the knowledge of reality had arisen. All knowledge was relative to the individual, according to the sensualistic and sceptical formula of Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things." The possibility of science was denied. And it is in the atmosphere of these theories and in relation to them that the doctrines of Democritus are put forth. The questions of epistemology once effectively raised, philosophy takes a new form.[2] Democritus deals with them in the interest of Atomism. Socrates, recognising the importance of this sceptical movement as directed by the Sophists, applied himself to the establishment of a doctrine of knowledge through conceptions, that he might find a sure and certain base for morality.

The transition time, from the predominatingly physical interest of early philosophy to the anthropological period that began with Socrates, was filled by the work of the Sophists. A controversy not lacking in acerbity has raged round the philosophic position of these men and their ethical influence. The representations of them which have been decisive in fixing modern views are principally those of enemies, Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle. They are mainly unfavourable and often contemptuous. And the older historians of philosophy have reproduced this unfavour-

[1] Brochard in *Archiv für Geschichte der Phil.* ii. pp. 374, 377, referred to in Burnet, p. 1 n. 1.

[2] Burnet, p. 369.

able view. The Sophists were charlatans, corrupters of morals, empty phrasemakers. But for a long time this view, in its unqualified form at any rate, has been obsolete. The strongest defence of the Sophists, no doubt, was put forward fifty years ago, in Grote's seventh volume; but the force of the reaction from the view he was opposing carried him into partiality. As the dust of controversy has settled down, their true position has come to be seen. They were men of a transition period. Bearing a name originally meaning sage or man of capacity, but by this time carrying the sense of professional teacher, they devoted themselves to the training of young men for public life, specially in the art of rhetoric, which in the increasingly democratic conditions of Athenian politics had become a highly valued attainment. This training rested with some on philosophic principles, but in the case of the more prominent names the principles were of such a type as to associate the name of Sophist with philosophic scepticism and practical deductions tending to moral laxity. They were not a philosophic school, there was no standard of Sophist orthodoxy; but, in the pursuit of practical ends, theories which were in the air came to be adopted, in varying forms and with different degrees of consistency, which have a sufficient connection to bear treatment together.[1] It is less distant from the truth to recognise in them a certain community of type than to emphasize their separateness.

It is not, moreover, with their general services to Greek culture so much that we are concerned, as with the attitude of a few prominent men to scientific and

[1] Cf. Ritchie, *Plato*, p. 65.

philosophic questions. And here their importance is in the expression of the negative moment in Greek thought at the point of its exhaustion on the path of nature philosophy, and before a new basis of certitude was found. This may seem at first not to differ from the traditional opinion, or only in an unimportant modification; but even the warmest apologist of the Sophists must admit that deservedly or not they are in men's minds the exponents of the average man's conclusions from his knowledge of the contradictory views of philosophers, and the mouthpiece of a time of weakened conviction. It is undeniable that Protagoras and Gorgias are rightly associated with views that on any interpretation undermine science. The question of their personal character and aims is an interesting one, and has long been decided in their favour;[1] but is not vital for philosophy. The point is, was their philosophic position analogous to the lack of moral conviction, the unrest and upheaval of the time, in its expression of acquiescence in failure to reach reality? Henry VIII. was a strong man, and in many respects a great monarch; but the facts are strained if we are asked to believe that he was also a person of ascetic spirit and admirable in his family relationships. The Sophists were respectable men and able teachers; but a strain is put upon the facts if it is denied that their philosophic influence was negative and dissolving.

It was from the breakdown of effort to ascertain the truth of things along the line of physical speculations that "Sophistic," in so far as philosophy entered into it, took its departure. Various thinkers had said that truth was not given in uncorrected sense-impression;

[1] Cf. the services of Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus to their states.

and practical confirmation of this was found in the conflicting answers given as to the nature of the real worlds. The different principles of the Nature-philosophers were no satisfying explanations, but had become cries of controversy. If earnest students reached such opposed conclusions, the explanation must be in defective tools of investigation; we could not reach objective truth.

Protagoras (*c.* 491–*c.* 422) is the author of the formula, "Man is the measure of all things; of the existence of things that are, and of the non-existence of things that are not";[1] and, farther, "things are to you such as they appear to you, and to me such as they appear to me." All knowledge was reduced to sense perception; and while the formula is not void of ambiguity, it is the interpretation that treats this perception as individual that fits in best with all the expressions used. It is unlikely, as Jowett[2] and Campbell point out, that the idea of contrasting the "universal with the particular subject"[3] could at this point be in the mind of Protagoras. It was rather the idea of bringing into recognition the part the human mind played in knowledge. It is with him the all-important factor. Knowledge on the strictest interpretation of the formula is reduced to pure subjectivity. And even with the modification which M. Brochard suggests, we have the intermittent reality of an object which emerges into being with and during sensation.[4] In neither case is there the foundation of science.

Even less equivocally Gorgias (fl. 427) stated his

[1] *Theætetus*, 152 A. [2] iv. 146.
[3] *Theætetus* (Campbell), Appendix C, p. 257.
[4] *Archiv für d. Gesch. der Philosophie*, ii. pp. 372, 375.

thoroughgoing scepticism. For him nothing existed; and if anything did exist it would be unknowable, and if known its knowledge would be incommunicable.

Hippias of Elis and Prodicus of Ceos, both younger than Protagoras, were distinguished, the first for his application to law of the principle that contradictions and changes destroyed its validity, and his assertion that it is tyrannical in its resistance to Nature; the second, for studies of words. Other and less able men pushed the principles of subjective relativism, in its application to morals, to the point of making might into right, or degenerated into mere exhibitors of dialectical battles on a level with professional boxing.

The service the Sophists could do to philosophy was done when they, by their assertion of principles which compelled the re-examination of what had been naïvely assumed, brought into view the problem of the basis of certitude. They made the unconscious dogmatism of the earliest period for ever impossible. No doubt that unconsciousness had been occasionally broken by glimpses of the uncertainty of sense-knowledge. And from the time of Parmenides[1] and Heraclitus especially, there had risen up a sense of an opposition between reflective thought and sensuous perception which was destined to come to an open issue. Yet it was not the contribution of mind to the complex whole of knowledge with which these and later thinkers were concerned, but simply review of the data of sense with its necessary correction of these.[2] The basis of knowledge was still ultimately sense, and it was left after reflection pervious to attack as before.

[1] *Hist. de la Phil.*, Janet et Séailles, p. 670.
[2] *Ib.* p. 671.

The sense of this, and the idea that confirmation was given to distrust in sense by the multiplicity and contradictory character of the answers of the Nature-philosophers to the question, "What is Reality?" constituted the strength of the Sophist position; and the force with which they asserted the subjective side of things, interpreted individually, was their service and their partial justification.

Practically, of course, they claim as teachers to have met a "felt want"; they supplied an article for which there was a demand. Considerations of philosophic devotion to truth had nothing to do with the case. Their teaching was regulated by public requirements, as the work of a coach by the standard of the examinations for which he prepares men.

Their disservice (and this is clearest in the later members of the order) was that they took themselves, and were often taken by others, as philosophers. Often they were men engaged in turning the perplexities of philosophy and the exigencies of a time of public unrest to their personal advantage. If the genuine philosopher concludes that there is no real knowledge, he will not content himself with falling back upon common convictions. If there is nothing to say, the genuine sceptic will say nothing. But from the supposed illusory character of sense-knowledge the Sophists went on to conclude, by their more degenerate representatives, the shifting character of ethics. And the training given to their pupils came to be supported, on the supposition that if all opinions were equally false, all were equally true, and justification could be found for their support. In Athens, careers lay open to talents. A man's firmest conviction might

be his own capacity to guide the State and also to serve his own ends. "Sophistic" supplied him with the means to impress the multitude. There were plenty of clever men in Athens ready to conclude, from the contradictions of philosophers, that there was nothing in philosophy, and to draw the further inference that ethical convictions rested on no certain basis; just as there are plenty of men to-day to argue, from the differences of Biblical critics, that the question of religion "lacks actuality." The reproach of "Sophistic" is that it gave quasi-philosophic form to these conclusions, and supplied a certain class of men with reasons for believing what they wanted to believe.

It is from Socrates that the movement takes its origin by which knowledge is to be newly based. He follows the Sophists in turning from the old path of philosophy to the study of the subjective conditions of knowledge; but it is with a different conviction as to the possibility of its attainment, and in a new spirit of moral earnestness. It is to the consideration of his pursuit and the measure of its success that we must now turn.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE TEACHING OF SOCRATES

### The Prosaic and Ideal Interpretations
### The Criteria

The question of authorities for the teaching of Socrates meets us at the outset of any attempt to deal with the subject. To two writers mainly, Plato and Xenophon, we are indebted for our knowledge; their testimonies being supplemented or corrected by what comes to us from Aristotle and others. Broadly speaking, outside the three named, allusions to Socrates are scanty, or of poor authority. The testimonies of Xenophon and Plato are very full, but differ much from each other. The references of Aristotle are brief, but of great value.

What, then, was the historic connection of our two chief witnesses with their subject? Xenophon is supposed to have become a follower of Socrates at an early age. The story of his life being saved by the philosopher in the retreat from Delium (424 B.C.) is not now accepted on account of its chronological inconsistency with the impression received from the *Anabasis* as to the author's age.[1] Another story, which

[1] Dakyns, *The Works of Xenophon*, vol. i. Note iii.

relates his first contact with Socrates, tells how the philosopher met the youth in a narrow lane, and, barring the path with his stick, asked him where this and that kind of thing could be purchased. The lad answered him modestly, and was then asked "where men were made good and virtuous." And on his answering that he did not know, Socrates said, "Follow me, then, and learn."[1] This was the beginning of his discipleship.[2] From the same source we learn that he kept records of the informal discourse of his master. Out of these doubtless the *Memorabilia* grew. The number and variety of the incidents and teachings recorded imply a lengthy and close intercourse between the philosopher and his pupil. They include correction of personal faults in disciples, discourses on filial and fraternal duty, on public life and military command, on finance and statesmanship, and many other practical matters interesting to a practical mind. To the truth of some of the stories he relates, he testifies of his own knowledge. Many times he says he himself heard such and such teachings. As to counsel given to himself, for example, he relates[3] that, when invited by Proxenus to join the expedition of Cyrus, who had been the friend of the Lacedæmonians in the war, he had consulted Socrates as to his acceptance or refusal of the invitation, and had received the counsel to consult the Delphian oracle; but having, like many another, first decided on his course, he inquired of the oracle to which of the Gods he ought to pray in order to successfully accomplish his journey. After he had received the response, he returned and told Socrates the result of his visit, and was censured

[1] Diog. Laërt. ii. 48. [2] *Circa* (?) 415 B.C. [3] *Anab.* III. i. 4–7.

by him for not inquiring first of all whether the journey was one to be undertaken or not. After this determination his whole life-course was altered. His exile resulted from his connection with the enemy of his country. It is uncertain whether he ever returned to Athens. Socrates was sentenced to death in 399 B.C., and if Xenophon did return before then it can only have been for a brief period. But he had enjoyed years of close intercourse with the philosopher, and it was a labour of love to write a vindication of the faith and morality of that misjudged heretic.

Plato's connection with Socrates was perhaps scarcely so lengthened. It appears to have begun about 410 B.C. It is not marked by any very special incidents. But the enthusiasm of discipleship has glorified Socrates by making him the spokesman of the Platonic Philosophy, and by preserving pictures beyond price of the living as of the martyred teacher. In the closing years of the Peloponnesian War, and thence right on to the fatal year 399 B.C., Plato was in the closest intimacy with his master.

So far as opportunity is concerned, both men, Plato and Xenophon, were most favourably situated. Long and close connection with a teacher whose pupils were in each case personal friends, equalises circumstance, and leaves the accounting for differences in the presentation of the Socratic philosophy to the personal equation. Here there is the greatest possible difference. Xenophon, it has usually been held, was an essentially simple nature, a man neither inclined toward speculative thought nor fitted for it, but one who conceived philosophy as largely a process of moral training. He was a cavalry officer and a country

gentleman, and at the same time a literary man, interested in history, politics, war, and sport; fully alive to the practical side of things, but apprehending less clearly the relation of all this to ideal principle. He disliked Athenian democracy and admired Spartan institutions; and soon after his return from the East ceased to be an Athenian citizen, and, making a virtue of his exile, became as much of a Spartan as he could.

His bent was practical. Philosophic discussion was not for the purpose of gaining intellectual satisfaction in the possession of a consistent scheme of things; it was a true training as opposed to the culture of the Sophists; an implanting of pious convictions and virtuous habits. The metaphysical basis of his master's theories could not be expected to attract such a mind. What he would give us, according to this view, we should expect to be a popular presentation of the easier and more external aspects of the Socratic teaching. His Socrates would be the moral censor of his time and the preacher of practical virtue, but hardly the leader of a philosophic revolution.

The case with Plato is altogether different. It is manifest that his presentation of Socrates is largely ideal. He chooses to put his own boldest speculations into the mouth of the teacher whose own thoughts, original and powerful as they were, clothed themselves in plain and homespun dress, and took a more modest range. The truth Plato is concerned about is ideal truth, not historical and chronological accuracy. It is his way of honouring the memory of his great master, to represent him setting forth cosmical and epistemological theories foreign to his actual thought. His own mind is the antithesis of Xenophon's. He breathes

freely in the upper air of abstractions. His view of anything may be unusual, extraordinary, wrong; it is never likely to be commonplace. Hence the Socrates we expect to find in his pages, and do find, is an enlarged, idealised figure, in which it is not easy sometimes to discern the homely lineaments of the original.

Now, when it was held that the one drawback to Xenophon's testimony was, to put it bluntly, his somewhat prosaic mind, incapacitating him from seeing the deepest things in his subject, and that, so far as he saw, his testimony could be absolutely accepted, which was, till recently, the orthodox view, the problem was simpler. Plato could enter into the full mind of his master, and, while persuading himself that his presentation was but the full development of what was germinally present in the Socratic teaching, did, it was certain, sometimes expand and idealise that teaching beyond recognition. What was said, then, was this, "We must go to Xenophon for the plain facts of the case: and if he only gives a limited and prosaic view, we can fill this out by the generous Platonic interpretation in so far as the two views are not flatly in contradiction." Xenophon is thus the check on Plato, who is really the deeper and truer interpreter so far as he can be accepted, which is, when held to fact by the plodding record of the humbler writer.

But it becomes clear to any patient reading that the matter is less simple. Xenophon is no more a mere recorder or annalist than Plato. In his own way he writes history "with a thesis." If he has not a special philosophy to teach in the same full sense, he writes, in any case, in a particular apologetic interest. He is

concerned to minimise the revolutionary aspects of the thought of Socrates. He wants to present a picture of the blameless teacher of virtue, the pious worshipper of the Gods; and he certainly succeeds in his aim. But we cannot but feel that it is at the expense of completeness. If Xenophon relates of his master nothing but what is true, he can hardly be cleared of sins of omission. The man he describes is too much clipped and shorn of his originality; not as daring or as radical as we feel the real Socrates must have been; too purely a moraliser, and even a proser. He could neither have inaugurated a new philosophy nor met a reformer's death. But this is not all. Xenophon has a constructive scheme in his mind. He writes not as a simple chronicler, but as a practised literary man. And his thesis is indeed constantly before him as he writes: He is not penning history in the modern sense. It is a eulogy that he gives us, not a biography, much less an estimate; and his view is limited by his apologetic and eulogistic aim as much as by his personal incapacity for pure speculation.

There was doubtless a temptation to each writer to simplify the complex personality of his subject by selection and omission. It was not easy to reduce to the simple moralist the man who could sit out the strongest at a drinking party, whose jests touched themes on which silence is deemed best to-day, and who could apply the principles of his philosophy to the arts of the courtesan. Nor, on the other hand, is it easy to recognise as a purely speculative thinker one who tells Aristippus that he knows nothing of any but relative good.

It is plain, indeed, that we do not attain to colourless

history in either of the great witnesses. We cannot escape from an altered Socrates by the simple process of taking Xenophon as final. It is as serious an error to lessen and make commonplace what was great and original, as to idealise and magnify. Plato's view is that of the poet and the idealist, but there is little question that he saw the inner truth of Socrates more clearly than the practical Xenophon. It has been seen before that the *Memorabilia* partakes little of the nature of notes. Xenophon is not a Greek Boswell, keeping chronological records of his master's words and doings. What he gives is a defensive plea with a collection of sample teachings, and a description of the method of their impartation. The individual characters of the discussions recorded are but indifferently realised. The answers put into the mouths of those who converse with Socrates seem sometimes prepared so as to minister to the greater glory of the principal speaker. It may be no objection that the opinions of Socrates are the opinions of Xenophon, for he may have accepted his philosophy complete from his teacher; but whether an objection or not, it is true. There is, too, about the whole of the Xenophontic portraiture a flatness that contrasts with the dramatically sharp realisation of individual features in the Platonic dialogues. Some few passages, like the talk with poor Euthydemus, make an approach to vigour and vividness, but a good deal of the matter of the *Memorabilia* is a little dull and insipid. Now, the charm of the conversation of Socrates was, we may be certain, very great, to attract men as it did through so many years, and it is permissible to think that some of its fascination has been missed in the record, as well as some of its less facile

elements, and much of the deep radical thought covered by its light play.

The most modern view of Xenophon's Socratic writings,[1] is that they are really composed in the spirit of "tendency." As Xenophon departs from history in his idealisation of Agesilaus, and makes Cyrus the central figure of a historical romance containing views of his own on education and government and many other matters, so in his Socratic writing he is not by any means a rigid historian, but an artist in literary portraiture, and the Socrates of the *Memorabilia* and the *Œconomicus* is to some extent an imaginative production. According to this view, we have to deal not with the plodding chronicler whose historic veracity is unquestionable if his vision is limited, but with a literary artist who presents a picture of his hero's life and teaching in accordance with a certain thesis of personal goodness in character and positive philosophic content in teaching. If he has read his master aright, a true picture may be given, but it is not got by historical exactitude. On its literary and quasi-historical side it will be a view analogous to his view of Agesilaus. Philosophically, other views representing the negative and hortatory sides of the Socratic work had been put forth with which Xenophon was dissatisfied, not because of incorrectness so much as of incompleteness. He was determined to show his master not as the perpetual questioner so much as the oracle of his friends, the teacher of positive truth, the guide in personal perplexity, the trainer of intellectual gifts for the public service. And religiously, too, he felt that he could

[1] Dakyns, *Works of Xenophon*, iii. pp. xxi, xxii.

give a more satisfactory representation of Socrates the pious man and the good citizen than could be gathered by those who had not personally known him, and whose impressions came to them from accounts that emphasized the perplexity in which, from their negative character, his discussions left men, modified by praises of his personal faith and piety.

Of the record thus given, the doctrine that virtue is knowledge and the dialectic of definitions are absolutely certain Socratic teachings. These things, indeed, are known as such through the testimony of Aristotle and the agreement of the Socratic schools. Teachings there are, it is thought, in the *Memorabilia* which find no analogies in the other writings of Xenophon; and, provided other more probable sources do not offer themselves, these may turn out to be truly Socratic. Other matter must be judged by its affinity with the ascertained teaching. The result is that we fall back inevitably on more or less subjective grounds of judgment. The references of Aristotle being accepted as of unquestionable accuracy, there remains the task of sifting Socratic teaching from the mass of Plato's dialogues and the Socratic works of Xenophon.

One or two principles tend to safeguard the truth of the matter. If Platonism is Socratic teaching idealised and developed in some directions almost beyond recognition, the artistic sense of Plato, as Fouillée[1] remarks, is too perfect for him to attribute to his characters doctrines of which they could not even have possessed the germ. The outgrowth is not monstrous but harmonious. And again in Xenophon the special appeal of his apology would have missed its aim had the

[1] *La Philosophie de Socrate, Méthode Générale*, i. ix.

real Socrates been to the ordinary Athenian a figure broadly irreconcilable with Xenophon's presentation. It is a view something like that of the unprejudiced man of average intelligence, although written by a man who is to the limit of his capacity a devoted disciple.

Taking whatever truth this view may hold into consideration, what we shall be led to will be careful judgment of all Xenophon's testimony, and the elimination of whatever can be shown to spring from his idiosyncrasies. In his Socratic writings it is evident, from criticism,[1] that there is much that is suspiciously like a personal contribution rather than a record,—the interest in strategy and cavalry generalship generally, in field sports and the management of a country estate, the fondness for Persian illustrations, the comparisons of Lacedæmon with Athens. We cannot build a true account of the Socratic philosophy merely by making an uncritical collection of quotations from all writings that mention the name of Socrates. There must be a "discerning of the spirits." But with the few but sure criteria given, the task, while difficult, is not impossible. It is not contended that much will not remain doubtful, nevertheless we may by taking pains reach a substantially correct view.

The difficulty, indeed, of this is not to be minimised. Take one point, supposed to be, above all, well established, the Socratic confession of ignorance, so beautifully dealt with in the *Apology*, as the basis of the oracular verdict awarding Socrates the crown of wisdom. Turn to Xenophon, and, as Benn has shown, nothing is more certain than that, if his testimony is to be accepted, Socrates was of all persons the least

[1] Cf. Dakyns, *loc. cit.*

self-distrustful. He was accused sometimes of virtually saying, "Come unto me and I will give you restlessness";[1] but in the *Memorabilia* he appears as a person who has no doubt whatever as to his own competency to pronounce verdicts on matters the most difficult and the most diverse. He can instruct a field officer or a statesman, can pluck out the heart of the mystery of artist and artisan alike. As was said of Macaulay, many would be glad to be as sure of anything as he is of everything. Compare this somewhat self-complacent state of mind with the enquirer of the Socratic dialogues of Plato, and it will be seen immediately how great must be the allowance for the point of view. Can we simply, as Benn does, attribute Socrates' confession of ignorance to Plato, who had a rigorous conception of knowledge, and who here puts his own idea into the mouth of his master and draws "a discreet veil over the positive side" of his teaching (for which we must resort to Xenophon), or can we reach a point where these apparent contradictions are reconciled?

As to this particular point we have incidental but emphatic testimony from Aristotle, from whom words can be quoted that seem to deny positive teaching to Socrates, of whom he says that he asked questions but did not give replies, confessing that he had no knowledge.[2] But while such an utterance establishes the point against which Benn contends, by showing the characteristic attitude of Socrates, it cannot, of course, in view of other and ampler testimonies, be taken as more than a mere description of a method that was habitual.

[1] Drummond.

[2] Arist., *De Soph. Elench.* 183*b*, 7.

The authority of Aristotle again enables us to say that of the mass of matter put forward in the name of Socrates, certain doctrines belong to the Platonic Socrates, not to the Socrates of history. He is "accredited" by Aristotle with two things, inductive arguments and definition by universal concepts;[1] and with being also the first to apply this procedure in the province of ethics.[2] But these concepts, upon which knowledge must rest, have not in the thought of Socrates become hypostatised into independent realities of a world above sense upon which the mind prepared by dialectic discipline alone can gaze.[3] This is Platonic doctrine. What with Socrates is as yet a product of abstraction, having reality in the mind only, is in the Platonic development an existence above and beyond individual objects, is indeed the only reality. Where this doctrine is taught, and where knowledge is traced to the mind's prenatal view of an eternal ideal world, recollection of which is awakened through the dialectical process, we have left the historic Socrates behind and are listening to Plato. In the identification of virtue and knowledge, too, Socrates and Plato agree; but there is, as Zeller points out,[4] a difference not negligible. Socrates knows but one virtue which, because it is science, is communicable. Plato does not consider conventional virtue altogether valueless;[5] it is a step to that which is based on knowledge.[6] Nor does his doctrine of the unity of virtue coincide with that of Socrates, for he admits the existence of particular

[1] *Meta.* 1078*b*, 27–30. [2] *Ib.* 1078*b*, 17–23.
[3] *Ib.* 1078*b*, 30–32; 1085*a*, 37.
[4] *Plato and the older Academy*, p. 448 *sq.*
[5] *Meno*, 97 *sq.* [6] *Repub.* 518 D, E.

virtues, such as temperance and bravery, fostered by music and gymnastic,[1] in the absence of the knowledge upon which alone, he yet holds, perfect virtue can be based.

By the use mainly of such criteria as the Aristotelian testimony, the artistic verisimilitude of the Xenophontic and Platonic portraits, and the study of the various developments of the Socratic philosophy, a view at once self-consistent and faithful to critically sifted testimony may be gained. It is by its success or failure in approximating to this that any attempt must be judged.

[1] *Repub.* 410; Zeller, *Plato*, p. 451.

# CHAPTER V

## THE TEACHING—*continued*

### 1. Socratic Method. Negative Criticism. Prominence of this, and Misconceptions arising therefrom. The Idea of Knowledge

However it may be as to the respective selection by Plato and Xenophon of the negative and positive elements, as the main matter of their representation, each is found in each. The positive in Xenophon is relieved by examples of negative criticism;[1] the negative in Plato by such positive doctrines as the doctrine of the knowledge that measures pleasures,[2] and the doctrine that virtue is knowledge.[3] And it is also certain that the negative, critical side of the Socratic philosophy was so prominent that it was in danger of being taken for the whole. Xenophon[4] speaks of those whose words and writings have given rise to the belief that "however powerful Socrates may have been in stimulating men to virtue as a theorist, he was incapable of acting as their guide himself," and wishes those who hold such views not to confine themselves to what "Socrates effected 'by way of castiga-

[1] *E.g.* Euthydemus, Xen., *Mem.* iv. ii.
[2] *Protagoras*, 357.
[3] *Ib.* 361.
[4] *Mem.* i. iv. 1.

tion' in cross-questioning those who conceived themselves to be possessed of all knowledge, but" to weigh "also his everyday conversation with those who spent their time in close intercourse with himself." He is anxious to show, as against impressions created by certain writings (of Plato, Antisthenes, and others (?)), that Socrates is a successful practical moralist and teacher as well as an inquirer.

Now, while we may admit that Xenophon succeeds in this, it is plain that the thing which struck many of his contemporaries about Socrates was just his negative criticism of current opinions. It seemed to them the characteristic of his philosophy. But even Xenophon himself, in a passage already quoted,[1] establishes the very thing he is attempting to modify—"He himself never wearied of discussing human topics." And his discussions were inquiries, searches for definitions, proceeding by way of rejection on examination of successive instances of the imperfect and the inapplicable until some statement was reached which was felt to satisfy the intellectual necessities of the case. The thing to be remarked is, that it was the process apparently much more than the conclusion which impressed many of the contemporaries of Socrates.

Everywhere he complained that he found unreal knowledge, ignorance unconscious of itself and posing as knowledge. He asked for definitions, and was furnished with instances. People were moving in mental ruts, and without a clear conception of the end of their activities. They were accepting as knowledge terms and phrases standing for something that lay aside,

[1] *Mem.* I. i. 16.

outside of their minds, round which their own intellect had never played. Society, custom, conventional religion were supplying them with the framework of their mental life; their minds were building no mansions for themselves. It was this irreflective acceptance of convention that must first be shaken before knowledge could be gained. He found everywhere the conceit of it but not the reality. Orators, men of affairs, poets, craftsmen, were guilty alike. Eloquent speeches were made in the assembly, in which terms such as justice, virtue, courage were freely used, without the speakers being able to define them. Men judged themselves fit for statecraft because of success in some handicraft; poets could give no rationale of their productions, but were the subjects of a kind of divine madness.[1] He could find no one who could rationally justify the conceptions he held of the nature of things. Thus, of necessity, the destructive and negative side of his mission came to be prominent. Worship, for example, was a great element in Athenian life. If the time had not come when it was "easier to find a god than a man at Athens," it is certain that acts of religion were liberally interspersed through Greek life. All its normal activities were consecrated. And if any conception should have been clear to the mind of an Athenian, it should have been that of piety. Take the case of Euthyphron. Socrates meets him in the porch of the King Archon, he himself having been impeached as impious at the instance of Meletus. After explaining the matter to Euthyphron, who is greatly astonished at finding him about the place, Socrates, in his turn, inquires what is the business which has brought

[1] *Apol.* 22.

Euthyphron there. He receives the answer that Euthyphron is indicting his father for homicide, as having caused the death of a slave by violence and neglect. Socrates marvels very much at the course of action his acquaintance has adopted, and asks him if his "knowledge of religion, and of things pious and impious is so very exact that, supposing the circumstances to be as he states them, he is not afraid lest he too may be doing an impious thing in bringing an action against his father." Euthyphron has no misgivings in the matter. He is regarded as a prophetic man, and considers himself a specialist in religious knowledge. According to his view, it is a pious thing to prosecute a homicide, even when the homicide is his own father. Socrates professes himself greatly impressed by a knowledge which in such circumstances can impart unswerving confidence of being right to its possessor, and conceives that his own cause would be greatly strengthened by instruction at the hands of Euthyphron; but in the meantime he is eager to learn the nature of piety and impiety which his friend knows so well. "Piety," Euthyphron answers, "is doing as I am doing." And he proceeds to support, from the myths of the gods, the propriety of punishing the guilty, whatever relationship he may hold to the avenger. He does not answer the question of Socrates, what piety is; he supplies an instance of what he deems pious conduct. As to the mythological support adduced, Socrates asserts that, for his own part, he doubts these stories; and he asks Euthyphron if he himself seriously believes them. Euthyphron's faith is of a hardy kind, and he is anxious to impart of the fulness of his knowledge of the affairs of the gods to Socrates, who, how-

ever, defers this to a more convenient season, and succeeds in bringing the discussion back to the question of piety. He wants to get at the general idea, "which makes all pious things to be pious." Euthyphron answers that it is "what is dear to the gods." Socrates has now got an answer of the type required, whether true or untrue. It turns out, however, on examination, that as there are, by admission, differences amongst the gods as amongst men, about questions of justice and honour, no course of action can be described as "dear to the gods" without qualification, for the same thing may please some and displease others. Thus by the definition the same action would be both pious and impious. The definition is then amended so as to declare that what all the gods hate is impious, and what they love pious or holy. Euthyphron accepts this. The question then arises, does the quality of the act precede and cause the love of the gods, or is it created by their love? It is decided that the gods love what is holy because it is holy; it is not their love that makes it such. The question still remains, In what does the pious or holy consist? "My question, Euthyphron, was what is holiness? But it turns out that you have not explained to me the essence of holiness. You have been content to mention an attribute which belongs to it, namely, that all the gods love it. You have not told me what is its essence. Do not, if you please, keep from me what holiness is; begin again and tell me that. Never mind whether the gods love it, or whether it has other attributes; we shall not differ on that point. Do your best to make clear to me what is holiness and what is unholiness."[1]

[1] Euthyph. 11 (Church).

"But, Socrates, I really don't know how to explain to you what is in my mind. Whatever we put forward always somehow moves round in a circle, and will not stay where we place it."

"I think that your definitions, Euthyphron, are worthy of my ancestor Dædalus. If they had been mine, and I had laid them down, I daresay you would have made fun of me, and said that it was the consequence of my descent from Dædalus that the definitions which I construct run away, as his statues used to, and will not stay where they are placed. But, as it is, the definitions are yours, and the jest would have no point. You yourself see that they will not stay still."

"Nay, Socrates, I think that the jest is very much in point. It is not my fault that the definition moves round in a circle and will not stay still. But you are the Dædalus, I think: as far as I am concerned my definitions would have stayed quiet enough."

"Then, my friend, I must be a more skilful artist than Dædalus: he only used to make his own works move; whereas I, you see, can make other people's works move too. And the beauty of it is that I am wise against my will. I would rather that our definitions had remained firm and immovable than have all the wisdom of Dædalus and all the riches of Tantalus to boot. But enough of this. I will do my best to help you to explain to me what holiness is; for I think that you are indolent. Don't give in yet. Tell me, Do you not think that all holiness must be just?"

"I do."

In obedience to this suggestion a new definition is sought in the idea of justice. The question whether

justice and piety are coextensive is settled in the negative. Justice is the more extended notion. Euthyphron now ventures on the statement "that piety and holiness are that part of justice which has to do with the attention which is due to the gods"; the other side of justice is in application to human things. Socrates thinks this a good answer. But it needs elucidation. If attention means here what it means, say, in grooming and tending cattle, it implies the conferring of benefit on the object. Do we benefit the gods by our care? We do not, Euthyphron admits. The "attention" paid to the gods, then, requires qualification before it can appear in a definition of piety. Euthyphron seeks to mend matters by saying that the attention he means is the attention of slaves to their masters. As masters use slaves, so the gods use men. Precisely what the results of this instrumental activity are is what Socrates wants to know, and Euthyphron replies:

"I told you just now, Socrates, that it is not so easy to learn the exact truth in all these matters. However, broadly I say this: if any man knows that his words and deeds in prayer and sacrifice are acceptable to the gods, that is what is holy; that preserves the common weal as it does private households from evil: but the opposite of what is acceptable to the gods is impious, and this it is that brings ruin and destruction on all things."

"Certainly, Euthyphron, if you had wished, you could have answered my main question in far fewer words. But you are evidently not anxious to instruct me: just now, when you were on the point of telling me what I want to know, you stopped short. If you

had gone on then, I should have learnt from you clearly enough by this time what is holiness. But now I am asking you questions, and must follow wherever you lead me; so tell me, what is it that you mean by the holy and holiness? Do you not mean a science of prayer and sacrifice?"

"I do."

The conclusion reached this time is that holiness is "an art of traffic between gods and men," the asking of what we stand in need of from them, and giving back to them what they stand in need of from us. This is agreed to. But a difficulty arises. It is easy enough to see how human needs are met by the gods, not how divine needs are met by man. Euthyphron thinks that the gifts we give the gods are not benefits, but "honour and homage," and "what is acceptable to them." But this is to deliver himself anew into the hands of Socrates, who asks:

"Then holiness, Euthyphron, is acceptable to the gods, but it is not profitable, nor dear to them?"

"I think that nothing is dearer to them."

"Then I see that holiness means that which is dear to the gods?"

"Most certainly."

But the definition has now assumed a form already rejected. Holiness and what is dear to the gods, it was decided, are quite different things. Euthyphron has just repeated a definition which mistakes the attribute for the essence, and all the work is to do again. The inquiry has so far been futile. But, for his part, Socrates does not mean to give in. He urges Euthyphron to give his whole mind to the question, and to tell him the truth. He must know exactly

the distinction between the holy and the unholy, or he would never surely have dared to undertake the prosecution of a parent for homicide, for fear of the divine anger if he were in the wrong. Socrates is at a juncture where he has special need of guidance in such matters, in order to repel the charge brought against him by Meletus. Will Euthyphron not impart the secret? But Euthyphron has had enough. The discussion must wait. He is in a hurry, and it is time for him to be off.

This dialogue is a perfect example of Socrates' cross-examining method in its simpler form. A question is started. Deprecating any ascription of knowledge to himself, that people may be disposed to make, Socrates presents himself as the earnest inquirer, yearning for instruction; he receives answers in succession, shown by their opposition to admitted principles to be insufficient or on other grounds inadmissible. The process is really a stripping of the interlocutor of his mental armour wherein he trusted, and reduction of him to defenceless embarrassment. Incapable of fatigue, Socrates is ready always to begin the quest anew; but the exhausted spirit of his companion usually craves repose. Protagoras has great admiration for the argumentative skill of Socrates, but is not prepared at the end of a long discussion to join him in fathoming the questions that have engaged them to the bottom; "it is high time for him to betake himself to other business."[1] No satisfactory solution of the problem set has been reached: all that has been done is to demonstrate the insufficiency of common answers. Socrates is the

[1] *Protag.* 361 E.

deadly enemy of the commonplace in explanations.

Euthydemus wished to be a successful man of action, and believed the way to attain this to lie through knowledge of what was in books. He had collected a large library, consisting of the most celebrated poets and philosophers; and already, through his effort to know "the best which had been thought and said in the world," conceived himself to have profited above many his equals, and looked forward confidently to a political career though he had not yet made his maiden speech in the assembly. Socrates believed that the ruling art must be learnt like other arts, and could be best learnt by intercourse with men of light and leading. He took, therefore, the opportunity of stating his opinion in jocular fashion in the hearing of Euthydemus, who had displayed anxiety "not to be thought to have learnt anything from anybody," and was trusting solely to his bookish training.

"It is clear from his customary pursuits, is it not, sirs, that when our friend Euthydemus here is of full age, and the State propounds some question for solution, he will not abstain from offering the benefit of his advice? One can imagine the pretty exordium to his parliamentary speeches which, in his anxiety not to be thought to have learnt anything from anybody, he has ready for the occasion. Clearly, at the outset, he will deliver himself thus: 'Men of Athens, I have never at any time learnt anything from anybody; nor, if I have ever heard of anyone as being an able statesman, well versed in speech and capable of action, have I sought to come across him individually. I have

not so much as been at pains to provide myself with a teacher from amongst those who have knowledge; on the contrary, I have persistently avoided, I will not say learning from others, but the very faintest suspicion of so doing. However, anything that occurs to me by the light of nature I shall be glad to place at your disposal.'"

And then there came the usual comparison of the political art with other arts, in its need of a special training: ". . . How appropriate would such a preface sound on the lips of anyone seeking, say, the office of State physician, would it not? How advantageously he might begin an address on this wise: 'Men of Athens, I have never learnt the art of healing by help of anybody, nor have I sought to provide myself with any teacher among medical men. Indeed, to put it briefly, I have been ever on my guard not only against learning anything from the profession, but against the very notion of having ever studied medicine at all. If, however, you will be so good as to confer on me this post, I promise I will do my best to acquire skill by experimenting on your persons.'"

By and by Socrates enters into direct conversation with the young man, and learns from him the object of his studies: he wishes to be a statesman and an administrator. Socrates commends his ambition, and inquires whether he thinks it possible to excel in these matters without being just and upright. Euthydemus both believes himself to be an upright man and to be able to "expound the works of righteousness." The opening is now given for the process of examination. Socrates suggests an attempt at classification of actions. Under R for righteous, all apparently just

and upright deeds shall be put. Under W for wrong, all unrighteous and unjust deeds. Well, then, on which side must lying go, and deceit, and chicanery, and enslavement? All are clearly wrong, Euthydemus thinks. Well, but, Socrates goes on to ask, if in war a general enslaves an unjust, wicked, and hostile State, what is the moral colour of the action? This is right, Euthydemus believes; and to deceive the foe, he suggests, while at war with them, is not thought wrong; or to steal their possessions. Thus, everything which at first was set down to the side of injustice must now be placed also on the side of justice. Thus, to define injustice is something different than to instance specific acts which are not constant in their quality. If the statement of what injustice is lands us in contradictions, it cannot be true.

The definition is then amended to this effect: "that while it is right to do such things to a foe, it is wrong to do them to a friend; but in dealing with the latter an absolutely straightforward course is necessary."[1] Euthydemus agrees to this change. But here still difficulties emerge. Casuistical questions arise. It is suggested that a general, in stress of war, may revive the courage of his demoralised men by a false statement; that a parent may, by an act of deceit, administer to a sick child medicine which may save his life; that one may take from a friend in melancholia the weapon with which otherwise he might commit suicide. What is the character of the act in such cases? Euthydemus now wishes to withdraw his wholesale assignation of such acts to the side of injustice. Thus, in spite of himself, Socrates compels his interlocutor to

[1] *Mem.* II. ii. 16.

review his own thoughts, to challenge them, and to refuse to rest in mere current conventions. No satisfying definition of justice is reached; the conclusions are negative, but, at anyrate, the ground is cleared. Reflection is awakened.

The common practice with him, which was, as we have seen, to press for a provisional definition of the subject of inquiry, may be further illustrated. In the *Laches*, beginning with the question of the education of the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias, and specially with the suitability of a particular accomplishment, that of fighting in heavy armour, Socrates is no sooner summoned as counsellor than he characteristically turns the inquiry to the nature of courage, the special part of virtue immediately under consideration. He asks Laches: "Tell me, if you can, what is courage?"[1] Laches gives a definition which is found on examination only to meet certain cases. The heavy armed Greek infantry soldier fights in one way, the Scythian cavalryman in another. The Spartans at Platæa showed courage, not by remaining in their ranks, but by a flight and sudden rally. And Socrates goes on to show that there are many other kinds of courage. Courage is not shown in war only, but in storms, illness, hardship, in political conflict, and in personal struggle against self-indulgence. "What is that common quality which is the same in all these cases, and which is called courage?"[2] Another effort resolves courage into endurance. But there is an endurance which is unintelligent, and thus evil and hurtful. And yet Laches thinks that one devoid of foresight and calculation who faces odds, is braver than one who faces

[1] *Laches*, 190 E. [2] *Laches*, 191 E.

battle with full knowledge of all the circumstances. Thus the inquiry lands again in contradiction. Courage is a noble thing, and the uncalculating endurance which Laches thinks to be courage is decided to be evil and hurtful. Thus courage is at once noble and base. Something is wrong.

"Then, according to your statement, you and I, Laches, are not attuned to the Dorian mode, which is a harmony of words and deeds; for our deeds are not in accordance with our words. Anyone would say that we had courage who saw us in action, but not, I imagine, he who heard us talking about courage just now."[1]

Laches is bewildered. He is a practical man, has fought beside Socrates in the wars, and thinks he knows what courage is; but he halts: "I am really grieved at being thus unable to express my meaning. For I fancy that I do know the nature of courage; but somehow or other she has slipped away from me, and I cannot get hold of her and tell her nature."[2] In the end courage is left without accurate definition, though, in the tentative definitions, elements that any scientific definition must take account of are brought forward. It must include, not only the natural unmeaning impulse which Laches wishes at one point to identify with it, but the clear-eyed consciousness of those who intelligently face moral or physical dangers.[3]

The same course is pursued in the *Lysis* with a like negative result. "What is friendship?" is the question. Is the friend the lover or the loved? Is friendship one-sided or reciprocal; is it a relationship of the good or evil, like or unlike or indifferent? No satisfying

[1] *Laches*, 193 D, E. [2] *Laches*, 194 B. [3] Jowett, i. 83.

definition is reached, but reflection is made to play on the subject from every side. Suggestions of friendship as a ministry and means to virtue are thrown out; but all is questioning and tentative. The first object of the discussion is attained if the speakers and bystanders are made to feel that they have no full and true conception of so important a relationship, and one that played so great a part in Greek life.

A similar method is followed in most cases. The provisional definition is put upon the rack until its inadequacy is revealed. The examples by means of which this result is reached are not selected and sifted in any rigid scientific fashion. They are taken from current speech and life. His practice in the matter came to be well known. It was this that Critias alluded to at the time that he and Charicles were seeking to "suppress" Socrates. "You had better have done with your shoemakers, carpenters, and coppersmiths. These must be pretty well trodden out at heel by this time, considering the circulation you have given them."[1] And in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades touches on the same custom of adducing handy and familiar illustrations and cases from daily life to test the definitions advanced in the course of discussion. "He clothes himself in language that is like the skin of the wanton satyr—for his talk is of pack-asses and smiths and cobblers and curriers, and he is always repeating the same things in the same words."[2] To overturn the first conception of justice entertained by Euthydemus he brought, as we have seen, instances of common practices in war and medicine; to set aside the soldier's definition of courage given by Laches, well-known

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. ii. 37. [2] *Symp.* 221 E.

practices of barbarian warfare and a notorious instance of Spartan tactics are adduced. His instances are simple and matter of fact. They speak "plain russet yeas and honest kersey noes." They are level to the average comprehension.

And their skilful selection and application made them most effective for their purpose. With ingenuous minds the result of talk with Socrates on any great subject resulted in an honest admission of the unsuspected difficulty of the subject and the speaker's own ignorance. With the self-sufficient it led to evasions and excuses amusing to read, but hardly amusing to the victim, as we saw in the case of Euthyphron.[1] With some it led to anger, as in the case of Anytus, whose belief in the teachableness of virtue is so ill-supported by Athenian examples, and whose petulant warning to Socrates seems almost to hide a threat.[2] But it did its work. It shook minds out of their self-complacent slumber, and started reflection. It made men see that the ideas that led them must bear the play of their intellect; that the mind must learn to challenge claimants for its allegiance.

It is easy to see how the constant repetition of this process gained for Socrates the reputation of one who was perpetually engaged in the criticism of current opinions without himself making any positive contribution to the sum of knowledge,—a thing which, indeed, he was constantly professing his inability to do. There is plenty of evidence to show that by many his usual methods of inquiry were regarded as issuing in nothing but perplexity. And he himself is reproached as apparently caring above all things to preserve a

[1] Cf. *Protag.* 361 E. [2] *Meno*, 94 E.

non-committal attitude of mind that he may be the freer to criticise all views and opinions. Meno's words are well known. He wonders whether Socrates is in earnest or not when he says that he does not know what virtue is; and after talking together for some time, he declares himself bewitched: "O Socrates, I used to be told before I knew you that you were always doubting yourself and making others doubt; and now you are casting your spells over me, and I am simply getting bewitched and enchanted, and am at my wits' end. And if I may venture to make a jest upon you, you seem to me, both in your appearance and in your power over others, to be very like the flat torpedo fish, who torpifies those who come near him and touch him, as you have torpified me, I think. For my soul and my tongue are really torpid, and I do not know how to answer you; and though I have been delivered of an infinite variety of speeches about virtue before now, and to many persons,—and very good ones they were, as I thought,—at this moment I cannot even say what virtue is."[1] It was experiences like this, often repeated, that made men hold of Socrates the opinion, which Xenophon labours to dissipate, that he was "an adept in the art of stimulating people to virtue negatively, but scarcely the man to guide his hearers on the true path himself."[2] If many went away like Euthydemus from an interview with Socrates feeling themselves to be "no better than slaves," or experiencing, like Meno, a temporary paralysis of thought; and if, of these, numbers less ingenuous than these men never cared to submit themselves to a further experiment,

[1] *Meno*, 79 E, 80 A, B.

[2] Xen., *Mem.* I. iv. 1 (trans. Dakyns, vol. iii. pt. i. 25, note 4).

and so never got beyond the primary negative cross-examination by which all comers were tried, it is certain that they would come to regard Socrates merely as a destructive reasoner, the effect of whose conversation was to induce uncertainty and doubt.

This prevalent opinion has not lacked support amongst interpreters of the teaching of Socrates. It has been thought that his work was essentially that of critical analysis, and that his teaching had no positive content of truth philosophically wrought out. Cicero considered apparently that Socrates' confession of ignorance was equivalent to a denial of the possibility of knowledge, and says of the Platonic dialogues, in which his teaching is given, that they contain no positive affirmations, but are inquiries in which all arguments are listened to but no positive result reached.[1] Amongst moderns, Grote, *e.g.*, is extremely anxious to show him to be a Sophist and nothing more, distinguished by his non-professional method and various idiosyncrasies, but not of another order. In examination, that is, of current opinions, Socrates relentlessly uses every negative test known to him by which he can show the unsound basis of such opinions and the wrong method of their formation; but, when anything affirmative is to be said, the methods of philosophy are abandoned, and he dogmatises without subjecting his own positive conceptions to the play of mind so freely directed against the notions he rejects.[2] Grote regards the two sides of the Socratic teaching as absolutely unconnected,—the philosophic reasoned side is the negative, which yields nothing but the discipline of examination and the

[1] *Acad.* i. 12, ii. 23.

[2] Grote, *Plato*, i. 292.

rejection of unsound views; the affirmative side is reached by intellectual sallies, and a prophetic and dogmatic attitude is assumed which has really no connection with the mental preparation for reasoned conviction in which such stress has been laid.

It may be at once conceded that Socrates was more successful in pointing out the insufficiency of current views than in supplying substitutes for them. He disclaims the name of teacher. He denies that he ever taught anybody. What he did was to inquire, in company with his friends, into matters of common interest. But if the conclusion of these discussions was to prove that neither he nor they had true knowledge, this conclusion was not the confirmation of an essential scepticism (which, indeed, Grote does not charge him with, but only with using his philosophy when engaged in pulling down, and with separating from it in building up). Another failure to satisfy the craving for true knowledge, and to realise the ideal of it which Socrates cherished, was registered; that was all. There was no denial of the possibility of true knowledge. There was, on the contrary, a fervent belief that man could attain to it, and that in its attainment lay the universal remedy for the ills of the time. But such knowledge as Socrates dreamed of was high, and he could not easily attain to it. Nevertheless, it was in the light of the ideal of knowledge held so firmly in his mind that he was led to turn the assault of his dialectic upon the lazy, haphazard, or conventional methods by which were formed the opinions which passed current for knowledge. If his large ideal could never secure its own realisation, it was, at anyrate, the power by which he saved himself

and others from bondage to the tyranny of custom, or the blind following of monitions and inspirations in which reason played no co-operating part. If he could never reach the perfect, he would not in mere despair of it settle down contented with the imperfect. And here Zeller is absolutely right in saying that the spring of his activity and the central thought of his philosophy was the idea of knowledge. For want of knowledge life all around him was becoming unregulated. The periods of terrible strain in Athenian history through which he had passed, when the ordinary moral supports of conduct seemed to fail, were just to him the necessary counterpart of the mental chaos in the nature of his contemporaries. Conventional morality had given way. Reverence and faith must feed on something other than old time theology. But the substitute had not come from such philosophy as existed. Its effect had rather been to increase scepticism by casting doubt on the evidence of the senses, by listening to which men had been led to adopt such strange and contradictory theories of the physical universe. Some teachers were accepting the situation, and showing men how to use the scepticism rising from the clashing of opinions and the strife of tongues in the interests of a selfish expediency. There could be no way out of such a scene unless by some path of knowledge not yet trodden. It could not be by a naïve acceptance of the evidence of the senses; it could not be by a recurrence to the unquestioning ethics of custom, nor by a search after the aids of an intermittent and unreasoning impulse such as agitated the poets, the heart of whose mystery Socrates had sought to pluck out; it could only be by

introducing, as had never been done before, the play of reason in the formation of ideas, the challenge of the intellect to the thoughts that proposed to constitute themselves the furniture of each mind.

### 2. Socratic Method—*continued*. Imperfect Systematisation. Positive Element. Procedure summed up. No Scientific Epistemology but use of Reflection

There has been much harm done by imposed systematisation. In their anxiety to secure for the splendid work of Socrates its full measure of recognition, men have been led to attribute to it more of scientific procedure in method than it can fairly claim. It does not follow because he was dissatisfied with the heterogeneous mass of prejudices, traditions, and customary beliefs which sought to pass themselves off as knowledge, and showed his dissatisfaction by his criticism of their formation, that he was able himself to construct a scientific epistemology, and assign its proper weight to every contributory factor in the formation of the conceptions which he regarded as of such supreme importance. The only way in which great systematisation can be secured for the loose and informal Socratic teaching, is by calling in the imagination to do for us what the sources fail to do. And this is sometimes openly done. Professor Ferrier said:[1] "In attempting to work out the philosophy of Socrates, I shall be compelled in the absence of full and accurate historical data to draw considerably on my own reflections for materials, and to fill in details which,

[1] *Lectures and Philosophical Remains*, i. p. 212.

though implied and hinted at, are not explicitly presented in any of the remains which are extant of the Socratic doctrines." In the interests of consistency and intelligibility he feels himself "obliged to attribute to him opinions which even Plato does not articulately vouch for as belonging to Socrates." For this course he considers himself to have "sufficient warrant in the general scope and spirit" of the philosophy of Socrates. "It is bad," he thinks, "to violate the truth of history; but the truth of history is not violated, it is rather cleared up, when we evolve out of the opinions of an ancient philosopher more than the philosopher himself was conscious of these opinions containing." Which sounds rather like a precept for symbolic prophetic interpretation, than for the sober study of the history of philosophy. Or consider Fouillée, who wrote two large volumes on the philosophy of Socrates, with a continuous attempt at systematisation, with much about his ontological and volitional theories, as to whose whole laborious effort the adjudicators of the French Academy, while admitting its great ability and success, say: "Est-ce à dire que même avec une science aussi exacte et une critique aussi forte, un tel esprit et une pareille méthode ne soient pas quelque peu sujets à des explications trop ingénieuses qui transforment plus ou moins la pensée de l'original? . . . il est difficile à un esprit aussi original de garder toujours la juste mesure, en cherchant constamment le côté nouveau et profond des choses, . . . on risque parfois, en accouchant les textes, d'en faire sortir de ces idées qui font penser au prétendu mot de Socrate sur l'infidelité de son disciple Platon";[1] the "mot" being that recorded

[1] *La Philosophie de Socrate*, i. pp. 398, 399.

by Diogenes Laërtius, who relates that when Socrates heard the *Lysis* of Plato read he said: "By Hercules, what a number of untruths the young man has told of me!"[1]

But if we discard the attempt to force the pliant, conversationally loose discussions of Socrates into rigidly accurate scientific moulds, we shall find a certain unity of principle and plan running through all his inquiries. Issuing directly from his conviction that the false knowledge, the conceit of knowledge so widely prevalent, was the worst barrier to the attainment of true knowledge, came the necessity of his intellectual iconoclasm. His first work was destructive, and could not be otherwise. As he looked round on Athenian life he could see nothing that commended itself to him as worthy the name of Science. Young, inexperienced men like Euthydemus, older men, held in repute as specialists of a kind, like Euthyphron, displayed on examination similar poverty of real knowledge. Yet everywhere fancied wealth existed; artists and artisans, statesmen and private citizens, were all living in the fool's paradise of a supposititious knowledge. The first duty of a Reformer and Teacher was plainly, then, that which we have seen already performed in the cases of Euthydemus and Euthyphron, to strip the mind of the wrappings which hid its real bareness and poverty; to shake false confidence, awaken doubt and self-distrust. So long as men believed themselves to have real knowledge in ethics or politics, or any other field, so long would they be impervious to true teaching. Submission to the process of mental spoliation of fancied wealth was not pleasant; and the more a

[1] Diog. Laërt. iii. 35.

man was entrenched behind walls of convention and tradition, the harder was it to get him to come out into the open and contend for the faith that was in him. It was the experience of Socrates that the Scribes and Pharisees of Athens were farther from the kingdom of knowledge than the humble.

Much less impressive, therefore, to many of his contemporaries, than his destructive criticism, were the constructive efforts Socrates seems to have made towards the realisation of his ideal of a true knowledge based on concepts reached by reflection. As we have seen, some would deny that Socrates had any reasoned contribution to make to the sum of positive knowledge. According to this view, Socrates' mind only worked philosophically when engaged in its iconoclastic task; when he aimed at positive teaching he was simply uttering the language of unreasoning dogmatism; what he said might claim attention as a prophetic utterance, but had no claim to be reasoned truth. If this were absolutely established it would mean a very serious deduction from the estimate ordinarily put on the Socratic work as "the invention of morality," the establishment of ethics on a rational basis; but is it established?

It is true that often he contented himself with clearing the ground without beginning any new building of knowledge. But it is not true that all his positive teaching is in the form of oracular declarations or mythical fancies. When in the conversation with Aristippus he finds the principle through which objects are beautiful in utility, his teaching may be untrue, but it is not unphilosophic. It is a reasoned theory. He holds a doctrine of finality. Adaptability

to a consciously conceived end is, in his mind, what confers beauty on objects. Whether in the rigour of his theory he does not show blindness to facts is another matter; but he has something which is the result of philosophic reflection to impart:

"And when Aristippus, returning to the charge, asked him 'if he knew of anything beautiful,' he answered: 'Yes, many things.'

"'Are they all like each other?'

"'On the contrary, they are often as unlike as possible.'

"'How then can that be beautiful which is unlike the beautiful?'

"'Bless me! for the simple reason that it is possible for a man who is a beautiful runner to be quite unlike another who is a beautiful boxer; or for a shield, which is a beautiful weapon for the purpose of defence, to be absolutely unlike a javelin, which is a beautiful weapon of swift and sure discharge.'

"'Your answers are no better now than when I asked you whether you knew any good thing. They are both of a pattern.'

"'And so they should be. Do you imagine that one thing is good and another beautiful? Do not you know that relatively to the same standard all things are at once beautiful and good? In the first place, virtue is not a good thing relatively to one standard, and a beautiful thing relatively to another standard; and in the next place, human beings, on the same principle, and relatively to the same standard, are called "beautiful and good"; and so the bodily frames of men relatively to the same standards are seen to be "beautiful and good," and in general all things capable

of being used by man are regarded as at once beautiful and good relatively to the same standard,—the standard being in each case what the things happen to be useful for.'

"'Then I presume even a basket for carrying dung is a beautiful thing?'

"'To be sure, and a spear of gold an ugly thing, if for their respective uses the former is well and the latter ill adapted.'"[1]

This doctrine may be sound or unsound. It seems an example of the blinding power of theory; but in any case it is a reasoned explanation. The element by which beautiful things are what they are is their common capability to minister to some human requirement. Beauty is subsumed under utility. Correspondence with end makes things beautiful. Again, when Hippias of Elis presses Socrates for his own view of justice, he succeeds in eliciting a positive statement philosophically reasoned.

"We have had enough of your ridiculing all the rest of the world, questioning and cross-examining first one and then the other, but never a bit will you render an account to anyone yourself, or state a plain opinion upon a single topic."

Socrates pleads, first, that he has been giving a practical exposition of justice in his life for many years; but pressed, he goes on to say, "I assert that what is 'lawful' is 'just and righteous.'"

He then goes on to demonstrate the identity of observance of the law with justice; but after arguing this point at length, he calls the attention of Hippias to the existence of unwritten laws which possess a

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. viii.

self-avenging power. And the justice which he has in his mind is manifestly identical with the observance of these laws. For the purposes of the argument certain customs are regarded as imperfect transcripts of fundamental unwritten laws. The just man, then, will not limit his obedience to the written law, but will beware of incurring the certain penalty "affixed to the transgression of the divine code," for "there is no escape for the offender after the manner in which a man may transgress the laws of man with impunity, slipping through the fingers of justice by stealth, or avoiding it by violence." [1]

There is apparently made here the assumption that human law represents the divine mind. And there are problems started; for if the full conception of justice includes obedience to unwritten laws of God, then, while there may be advance by one who may be supposed to have preceded his fellows in insight into these gradually unfolding truths, it may easily bear the aspect of contradiction. Yet it is not really transferring the ground of action to something essentially different when, at the last, Socrates places his own obedience to the law of God, uttered in the voice that summons him to his mission, over against the verdict of his fellow-citizens. The advance must appear flat contradiction when it comes from growing insight. Justice working through the stubborn medium of Israel's early tribal formation can only utter itself in the crude and partial decisions that identify the individual's guilt and righteousness with those of his tribe. The more sensitive and discriminating mind of later time could not tolerate this merging of man in the

[1] Xen., *Mem.* IV. iv. 21.

mass.[1] Creon so believes in the divineness of State law that he can understand no advance and no supersession of it in the interests of a larger view. Antigone abides by her sense of the unwritten laws, which can only appear to the narrow nature of the king as a contradiction and not an advance. There is no contradiction between the obedience of the just man to the laws which the *Crito* celebrates and the disobedience because of fuller insight which the *Apologia* records.

In any case there is here a theory of justice rationally based, whether pervious at points or not, sustained by appeals to observation and experience, capable of adaptation to widely different circumstances, and consistently held. Not to be ignored either are other examples which Xenophon gives of positive theory and precept. The definition of piety[2] is wrought out on lines parallel with the conception of justice: it is narrowed to the point of legalism, but within its limits is reasoned. It may mean little more than ritual correctness, but the principle is that of conformity to law; the question of the truth of the worship, the being and moral quality of the gods, is not raised. In similar fashion he discourses on the wise, the good, the beautiful; on courage, governments, and politics, and the character of a good citizen.

We may sum up the philosophic procedure of Socrates on this wise: the ruling conception of his mind was that of knowledge. Regarding himself as a man with a mission to his countrymen, bewildered in mind by the conflict of opinion and relaxed in moral

[1] Josh. vii. 24; cf. Deut. xxiv. 16; Ezek. xviii. 4.
[2] Xen., *Mem.* IV. vi.

tone by the loosening of conviction, he saw that no remedy lay in a return to crass conservatism—"the disease of thought must be expelled by thought." Morality must be built on a new foundation of knowledge. Holding, as he did, that choice inevitably followed the apparent best, the secret of wrong action for him lay in ignorance: the people "perished for lack of knowledge." A moral renovation must follow the clarifying of men's thoughts by the admission of mental light; to implant the ideal of knowledge in them, and induce them to seek its realisation, became thus his lifework. Against the false knowledge—the conceit of knowledge which blocked the way to the entrance of the true, he directed the force of his celebrated "irony," by which, "awaiting in an affected deference" the opinions of others, his ignorance not permitting him to propound any of his own, he subjected to searching analysis every proposed definition of the matter in hand, until those to whom he spoke were reduced to the same healthy confession of ignorance that he himself had made at the outset of the inquiry. This irony of his became a winnowing fan to separate grain from chaff. Those who endured its operation and still remained bent on the pursuit of truth, became then the subjects of that idealisation of Greek companionship and purification of the debased idea of love which constituted the Socratic Eros, that is, the mood or atmosphere in which common inquiry after truth was undertaken. But the testing, critical, and negative aspect of his work did not cease with the formation of a spirit congenial with his own as a "pilgrim of truth." The most favourable dispositions were subjected to the process which he humorously

described as his art of intellectual maieutic,[1] by which he aided the mind in its delivery of the crude and incorrect notions with which it was largely filled, in the expectation of reaching that truth which the Platonic Socrates regards as innate,[2] the memory stored up in the soul of the visions of a former life. Here, indeed, we come upon debatable ground. On one side this process looks simply like a special application of the sifting method; on the other, it is inspired by convictions which more properly belong to Platonism, the doctrines of the ideas and the acquisition of knowledge by reminiscence. What remains credible is that the historic Socrates, absorbed with the awakening of reflection and the reference of moral conceptions to a standard that was subjective as opposed to all merely authoritative and conventional rules, though not merely individualistic, did use such a process as maieutic, in the belief, not in the mind's possession of a heritage of truth from a former life but, in its power to recognise and possess itself of truth by the persistent examination of its gains from experience. How that experience was reliable he never asked. He had no scientific epistemology. He did not begin his examination of what passed for knowledge by testing the initial possibility of knowledge at all. He did not raise the special questions emerging in such an inquiry. Nor did any essential doubt hamper him when he turned from the play of his reflection on convention and tradition to the enunciation of positive opinions.

In the course of his teaching he makes use of induction and definition in somewhat loose and tentative fashion. If the point before the mind is, say, the

[1] *Theæt.* 149 *sq.* [2] *Meno*, 81 *sq.*

quality of good citizenship, he begins by enumerating for consideration commonly received elements of that character. In the matter of expenditure, for example, the superiority of the good citizen will be shown "by his increasing the resources and lightening the expenditure of the State." The disputant agreeing, Socrates supposes that in the event of war this superiority will be still farther shown by his rendering his State superior to her antagonists. This being clear, the case will be the same when he is sent on an embassy as a diplomatist, he will set himself to secure friends in place of enemies; and in parliamentary debate he will serve his country by putting a stop to party strife and fostering civil concord. Thus through particulars, by disengaging their common element, Socrates works his way to some satisfying conception, by conformity with which, again, any case in dispute may be tested. Whatever particular instance emerges he leads the discussion of it back to the consideration of the essential nature of the quality in question.[1]

This is not done on any elaborate logical theory. His induction is an accumulation of instances neither complete nor critically sifted. It is made on no clear scientific principles. It is, as Piat says, "sinuous and multiform as life." Notwithstanding his criticism of tradition and custom, he believes there *is* truth to be found in the commonest judgments and opinions of men. What is known and admitted by all constitutes the beginning of his reasoning. "He had a saying that Homer had conferred on Odysseus the title of a safe, unerring orator, because he had the gift to lead the discussion from one commonly accepted opinion

[1] Xen., *Mem.* IV. vi. 1, 13; v. 12.

to another."[1] Observation is, indeed, indirect and incomplete, and his treatment of the notions it yields is obliged to be level to the comprehension of his audience. It is not facts themselves so much that are put on the rack to yield their secret, as the conventional notions of them. But by examination and comparison these notions are widened or narrowed, modified or abandoned, until some sense is gained of their approximate adequacy to the truth of things. We have seen his method illustrated in dealing with the common notions of justice and generalship. And this method with more or less of thoroughness was applied to every type of question. He holds the idea up to the light, compares it with its opposite, suggests complementary considerations, and seeks thus to approach closer and closer to the heart of the matter. If the question is one of art, the current conception he finds not so much erroneous as defective, and proceeds to supplement it by considerations of soulfulness a little foreign to the placidity of Greek art in its more characteristic forms. He first describes the purpose of painting as being to represent colour and contour realistically; then its method of idealisation; then he passes to consider the possibility of representing emotion, "the characteristic moods of the soul, its captivating charm and sweetness, with its deep wells of love, its intensity of yearning, its burning point of passion." Parrhasius admits that faces show feelings, and that in their expressions they can be rendered. Art, in a word, to be worthy must enlarge its ideal; it is to hold up the mirror to the man, soul and all. Sculpture must imitate not simply the gesture and

[1] Xen., *Mem.* IV. vi. 15.

poise of the wrestler or warrior, the tightening and slackening of his limbs, it must show the threatening of conflict and the radiance of victory.[1]

Or, is the question one of fitness for a political life and moral right to aspire to rule, then the aspirant to honour must be a benefactor to the State. But where to begin? One way is to increase its wealth. Does Glaucon know the sources and amounts of the State's revenues? If this point has been omitted, as it has, he probably can run through the items of expenditure and dock off some extravagances. Ignorance here rendering farther progress impossible, along the line of financial reform, it is suggested that war is a method of national enrichment. But this involves knowledge of the relative weight of forces; does Glaucon know this? But Glaucon is unfurnished here also. But defensive war and fortifications are other matters; of course, he knows all about these? He is no expert in these matters either. Then the State's property in mines; he knows about them, and why they are less productive than before? This also is among the things the would-be politician has yet to learn. Does he then know about the city's food supplies? It is a vital matter. By this time Glaucon is convinced of the greatness of the task he essays: "It is a colossal business this, if I am to be obliged to give attention to all these details." Socrates suggests to him to begin with studying how to augment the resources of one household before attempting to manage the ten thousand homes of the city. "If, therefore, what you thirst for is repute and admiration as a statesman, try to make sure of one accomplishment; in other words,

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. x. 7.

the knowledge, as far as in you lies, of what you wish to do."[1] The corrected idea of any thing or quality thus becomes the test of attributes and actions. The general idea being reached by examination of particulars, a new particular must show its conformity with the reasoned conception or the reverse. By deduction the conception is shown to enclose the instance in question. Lamprocles, who professes himself unable to endure his mother's sharpness of speech, is asked for a definition of ingratitude. He supplies one: "When any has been kindly treated, and has it in his power to requite the kindness but neglects to do so, men call him ungrateful."[2] He is then led on successively to the admission that ingratitude is comparable to enslaving friends,—that it is pure evil; that its degree of heinousness is directly as the benefits received; that children are, conspicuously, recipients of benefits,—until his own conduct is plainly brought under the definition he has himself furnished of ingratitude. In the talk with Hipparchus[3] (in which it may be perhaps permissible, as Dakyns suggests,[4] to see a reminiscence of Xenophon's own) we find Socrates first eliciting the character of a cavalry officer's work in its pure generality as that which "concerns horses and riders," and then showing successively its elements as preserving and improving the condition of the horses, the discipline of the men, and the officer's own capacity of inspiring them by example and speech. In these and similar cases we can see the practical working of the Socratic conceptions as criteria of acts and attributes.

Behind the conception thus used lies the patient, if

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. vi. [2] *Ib.* II. ii. 1. [3] *Ib.* III. iii.
[4] *The Works of Xenophon*, i. p. lxxx.

unsystematic, labour of reflection, whose results are in that conception conserved for dialectical uses. But neither in the process towards nor from conception is there a rigid system. The movement is fluid, conversational, often apparently casual. It is something like the famous definition of criticism, "a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches." In the discourses that we have, two things are often separated, the search for conceptions and the use made of them when found, so that it seems that the search is futile; for in many discussions no positive conclusion is reached, or, on the other hand, that the principle under which the particular instance is to be classed is taken without examination. Sometimes Socrates appears content with analogical suggestions, as in his comparison of the ruler's task to that of the herdsman,[1] or the work of the unseen gods in the world to the action of the soul in man.[2] Nevertheless, under what appears sometimes as the mere sketch of a method, and accompanying the spontaneous dexterity of all his agumentative excursions, there is manifest the aim of attaining real knowledge, *i.e.* to gain true conceptions of the object of the thought; the plan of accumulation and comparison by means of which the elements of such conceptions become detached from particulars and unified, or conversely the application of the criterion to instances adduced, and the moral condition of successful inquiry. And it is no unanswerable criticism of this easy and flexible mode of search for truth, that it does not anticipate the rigour of the processes of modern science. For the examination of the motives and principles, emotions and beliefs which

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. ii. 32. [2] *Ib.* IV. iii. 14.

make the moral raw material of life, it is not easy to see what other plan was open at the time than to turn the light of reflection on them, as Socrates did. As for natural science, as then understood, he humorously disclaimed capacity for its pursuit; and if it is true that from time to time he cast glances in its direction, still the passionate pursuit of his life was ethics. His plan was often to start from a germinal conception, from a fragmentary idea, the element of truth in the common view, to seek a full conception; and it was in the light of an idea of knowledge that he criticised so many of the notions current about him and evolved in debate. The student of natural science deals with facts. It is of no consequence to him what past or current accepted explanations are. He applies himself to the facts; he looks and listens to what occurs, not what under some preconceived theory ought to occur. But then to the isolated instances accumulated by observation he applies the interpretative key of provisional supposition, from which, being admitted, he deduces that certain results can be anticipated; and resorting again to observation to see if these results are actually to be found in nature, he arrives at length, after tests and trials of many kinds, and under varying conditions, at the confirmation of his principle of explanation; his facts are bound together in a theory verified in all imaginable ways. Nothing like this was ever attempted by Socrates. Natural phenomena possess interest for him, which shows itself in quaintly observant remarks. But he felt no ambition to rival the natural philosophers on their own ground. Nor did any such systematic induction reveal itself to them; and the discoveries or anticipations of discoveries made

by them were mostly fortuitously happy. Whatever truths of natural fact they gained, they never got beyond the stage of supposing that things could be known by talking about them rather than by watching them. And even Socrates' observation of the facts of moral life never stripped itself entirely of the lumber of common notions and language, so as to come into contact with these facts in the austere and rigorous fashion of natural science. Nevertheless, he was able to do much. Turning away from pursuits which he felt to be largely fruitless, and which he regarded in their more extreme developments as even impious, he bent himself to the work of establishing a reflective morality. He brought the subject into view in the field of moral action, and it remains his greatest praise that through him more than through any other Greek thinker, the individual came into his moral kingdom.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE TEACHING—*continued*

### Socrates' Interests absorbingly ethical—Value placed on Knowledge as Basis of Action—Standpoint—Virtue is Knowledge

The interests of Socrates were absorbingly ethical. No doubt it is possible to regard him as a speculator whose mind was more fascinated by the intellectual light of conduct than its issues. As to these he has been described as "terribly at ease in Zion." The intellectual framework of any creed or ethical system can occupy the mind as a mental satisfaction distinct from concern with the outworking of its precepts or evangel. Any thinker, *e.g.*, can approach Christianity as a scheme of the universe, and be occupied with it as such, without thereby knowing the zeal of an evangelist. But no such attitude of intellectual detachment characterised Socrates. His spirit was one of moral earnestness disguised under *bonhomie*. There was an evangelic ardour under the mask of the man of the world. He believed that he could further no moral interest of his countrymen save through an enlightenment and enlargement of their minds; and hence the peculiarly intellectual form of his mission.

He regarded righteousness, the realisation of the moral ideal, as the goal of all his speculations and inquiries, and this accounts for the prevailing limit of their range. A moral reformer who travelled to his end by way of freeing and widening the minds of men, not by restricting them, may be his not unfitting description. He was essentially Greek in his conception of how ethical elevation was to be secured. Arnold quotes words which Goethe used about himself which might with little change apply to Socrates: "After all, there are honest people up and down the world who have got light from me; and whoever gives himself the trouble to understand me will acknowledge that he has acquired thence a certain inward freedom." This "inward freedom" came to many through the discussions of Socrates.

It is, of course, possible to gather from his discourses many allusions to other matters than those of conduct. Some of these have been already cited. No one had a more alert or responsive intellect. He is ready to discourse upon anything and everything, and often to advance theoretic explanations and positive opinions with a readiness that seems quite at issue with his normal attitude of learner. If the *Economist* may be cited, consider his discussion with Critobulus on household management; it begins with the usual sword-play about definitions, establishing that wealth is the possession of beneficial things by him who understands their use,[1] reminding us of Ruskin's definition of wealth—"the valuable in the hands of the valiant"; he then goes on to assert that wealth comes to those who keep their wits upon the stretch and pay attention to their businesses;[2] whose houses[3]

[1] *Œcon.* i. 8 *et seq.* [2] *Ib.* ii. 18. [3] *Ib.* iii.

are fitting rather than grand, well ordered rather than crowded with furniture, possessing attached domestics in contrast to badly governed ones; whose farming is marked by wise expenditure of capital as against starving of its real needs; whose horse-dealing is a source of profit, not a short cut to poverty; whose marriages are the discovery of helpers in economy, instead of being, as with many, means of disaster. He deals with husbandry and war.[1] He passes a severe verdict on the mechanic arts as physically and morally enfeebling. He illustrates from Persia the case of economy based on science and displayed in husbandry (if we have not here Xenophontic historic fiction giving itself play in a congenial field), showing that there the king interests himself mainly in the work of the farmer and the soldier. He sounds the praises of agriculture as at once nourishing men, making them hardy, generously requiting their toil, and preparing them equally for the stress of war or for mutual peaceful service. By a process of observation and selection through rewards, congenial dispositions are discovered among the farm slaves, attached by kindness to the employer and put in possession of his craft and mystery of agriculture;[2] which is no such difficult matter to grasp in its main principles, but that Socrates himself can display a knowledge of them, rather evoked than acquired, the whole pursuit being indeed but a special application of common sense and observation. Or take the picture of him in the *Symposium*[3] of Xenophon,—the great

[1] *Œcon.* iv. v. vi. [2] *Ib.* xii. *et seq.*

[3] Murray regards this work as an imaginative production, *Anc. Gk. Lit.* p. 321.

man painted in his lighter moments, as Boswell gives us his Johnson at the Literary Club, or with Wilkes in the tavern. Even in these hours his intellectual curiosity fastens on the possibility or need of a rational explanation of the commonest things. He moralises on scents,[1] on woman's capacity and training,[2] humorously describes and justifies his own dancing performances,[3] discovers the rationale of moderate drinking,[4] starts the conversation in which each member of the party describes what he is proudest of, and undertakes to defend its value,[5] has his famous beauty contest with Critobulus,[6] exchanges chaff with the Syracusan showman,[7] criticises entertainments that are dangerous or merely extraordinary,[8] wants to know the scientific explanation of candlelight,[9] and winds up his contribution to the evening's entertainment and profit with the praise of spiritual love.[10]

Here and elsewhere, beside the ever-recurring moral questions, are found, indeed, tokens of widely alert intellectual interests, the attitude of mind that wants to grasp the explanation of things. The necessity of getting to the rational core of every fact is imperious with him. Every amusement and spectacle becomes the object of incessant play of mind. He cannot simply enjoy anything, but, like the famous mathematician, wants to know of a poem "what it proves." It comes over one in reading of this mania for "improving the occasion" in his lighter moments even, that the Greeks must have been a good-natured

[1] *Conv.* ii. 3, 4. [2] *Ib.* ii. 9. [3] *Ib.* ii. 16–19.
[4] *Ib.* ii. 24–26. [5] *Ib.* iii. 2 *sq.* [6] *Ib.* v.
[7] *Ib.* vi. 6–8. [8] *Ib.* vii. 2, 3. [9] *Ib.* vii. 4.
[10] *Ib.* viii. 9 *sq.*

people, or that from some inborn defect we are unable to project ourselves sympathetically into what for them meant social enjoyment. We feel that the report only partly accounts for the impression; that the edge and sparkle have disappeared from the conversation, through Xenophon's prosaic handling. So that we can understand how the wonder came to be expressed, "how it was possible that Socrates had not depopulated Athens through fear of his presence." But the extreme to which this pertinacity in pursuit of an intellectual satisfaction runs, still tends to confirm the supreme value which he placed on knowledge as a basis of action, even trivial or sportive action. In all things—art, sport, business, social amusement—the soul is knowledge.

Yet it is not in these miscellaneous argumentations that the deepest interest of Socrates manifests itself, but in the region of moral conduct. What is the rational basis of action? What makes the possibility of a moral science? Can anything but science be taught? And if virtue can be taught, must it not itself be science? It was in the region of such questions that the Socratic philosophy lived. Practically, Socrates was a preacher of righteousness, but nothing could be farther from the fact than to regard his activity as analogous to those utterances of poets and soothsayers, produced under the pressure of gusts of feeling of which he complained he could get no rational account. He held a rational creed; a man's goodness is directly as his wisdom. Nicias has often heard him say that "Every man is good in that in which he is wise, and bad in that in which he is unwise.[1] "He said that

[1] *Laches*, 194 D.

justice, moreover, and all other virtue is wisdom. That is to say, things just and all things else that are done with virtue, are 'beautiful and good'; and neither will those who know these things deliberately choose aught else in their stead; nor will he who lacks the special knowledge of them be able to do them, but even if he makes the attempt he will miss the mark and fail. So the wise alone can perform the things which are 'beautiful and good'; they that are unwise cannot, but even if they try they fail. Therefore, since all things just, and generally all things 'beautiful and good,' are wrought with virtue, it is clear that justice and all other virtue is wisdom."[1] In the *Protagoras* we are told that "men err in their choice of pleasures and pains; that is, in their choice of good and evil, from defect of knowledge."[2]

We have to ask further questions about this knowledge. It is not any knowledge specialised within a narrow field, as the frequent use of analogies drawn from special arts and crafts might imply (though special virtues are called sciences); it is not traditional knowledge nor the knowledge of ordinary unsifted opinion. It is implied rather than stated that it is knowledge of a good that is universal in which the personal aim becomes realised.[3] The individual good must accord itself with the supreme good, the good of the whole, that which is always and everywhere good. This knowledge alone can beget and guide rational action.[4] Short of this there

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. ix. 4, 5.

[2] *Protag.* 357 D.

[3] *Mem.* IV. v. 2 *sq.*; III. ix. 14; I. vi. 10, 14; *Crito*, 47 E, 48 A, B, etc.

[4] *Euthyd.* 281 E, 282 C, D.

is no virtue as there is in reality no knowledge. These statements must be examined.

Sometimes it seems as if Socrates forswore the knowledge of or interest in anything but relative good. In his conversation with Aristippus he certainly appears, at first sight, to disclaim any other conception. Aristippus[1] wished to know "'if he knew of anything good,'" intending, in case he assented and named any particular good thing, like food, or drink, or wealth, or health, or strength, or courage, to point out that the thing named was sometimes bad." Socrates asked in return:

"'Do I understand you to ask me whether I know anything good for fever?'

"'No,' Aristippus answered, 'that is not my question.'

"'Then for inflammation of the eyes?'

"'No, nor yet that.'

"'Well, then, for hunger?'

"'No, nor yet for hunger.'

"'Well, but,' answered Socrates, 'if you ask me whether I know of any good thing which is good for nothing, I neither know of it nor want to know.'"

Here he appears to give up what, in other places, he zealously contends for—the idea of the absolute good; and in the immediate sequel identifies goodness with utility and utility with beauty. It is on such evidence that Grote relies for his assertion that the "historical Socrates, as reported by Xenophon, enunciated very distinctly the relative or subjective view,[2] —that is, as to the nature of the good. It is, however, by no means certain that this surface view of the

[1] *Mem.* III. viii. 2 *sq.* [2] *Plato*, ii. 585.

passage is correct; notwithstanding the fact that Zeller[1] also reads it in this sense. What Aristippus inquires about is, it may be contended, as Fouillée contends,[2] not the supreme good. He asked Socrates "if he knew of anything good" (εἴ τι εἰδείη ἀγαθόν). And it is legitimate to say that ἀγαθόν τι is not synonymous with τὸ ἀγαθόν; and that what Aristippus is seeking is not a universal definition, but a mere opportunity of controversial retaliation by criticising any Socratic selection of things as good; just as Socrates himself had done to Euthydemus in the first days of their intercourse. To such an inquiry the response is apposite, that he neither knows of any good thing which is good for nothing, nor wants to know. Nevertheless, the discovery of relativism in Socrates' teaching is obviously easy. To Euthydemus he shows (while setting out to inquire about "the good") that that which is useful in certain relations may be interchangeable with that which is good in the same relations;[3] nothing more is reached than the definition of a particular good as a particular utility. So of beauty; he asks: "'Can we speak of a thing as beautiful in any other way than relatively?'" and presumes that to "turn a thing to its proper use is to apply it beautifully"; concluding that "the useful is beautiful relatively to that for which it is of use."[4] There is in such passages no assertion of belief in absolute good. He moves in the region of relativism. He is using the positive side of the principle by

[1] *Socrates* (Eng. trans. Reichel, pp. 149 (note 4) *et seq.*).
[2] *La Philosophie de Socrate*, i. 131 *sq.*
[3] Xen., *Mem.* IV. vi. 8.
[4] *Ib.* IV. vi. 9.

whose negative application he shattered the successive attempts of Euthydemus to define justice, and which served to shatter many similar tentative efforts. In such conversations he seems to know nothing of absolute good. He knows various specific utilities; that is all.

Generally it is true, also, that he assumes the ordinary Greek view to be correct which makes happiness the end of human action. Yet it is certain that the interpretation he put upon happiness, his identification of it now with virtue, now with knowledge, separated him from current Greek ethics. He cannot, in an unmodified way, be summed up in a term like "Eudæmonist" without misconception. For him, the good, utility, and happiness are not distinguishable as ends; they are parts of one end, aspects of an indivisible ideal, after which, blindly or intelligently, all men strive.[1]

Some special difficulties attend on efforts at precise settlement of Socrates' position. If what used to be regarded as the prosaic and plodding report of Xenophon be followed, as has been sometimes done without a critical selection of materials, it would be tolerably easy to establish a fair case for the utilitarian view of Socrates; although even then some passages would remain intractable, *e.g.* the passage that speaks of the unwritten laws,[2] notwithstanding the strange utilitarian reasons advanced for obeying them, or that which postulates freedom[3] as the first condition of the virtuous life. But going beyond the *Memorabilia*, even in the *Symposium* we are haunted by doubts.[4] The

[1] Cf. Séailles, *Histoire de la Philosophie*, p. 267.
[2] Xen., *Mem.* IV. iv. 19 *sq.*
[3] *Ib.* IV. v. 2–5.
[4] *Ante*, p. 153.

*Economist*, too, the whole drift of which favours the utilitarian view, while containing historic matter, does, we feel, take us on to somewhat uncertain ground. The thoughts and illustrations are often more Xenophontic than Socratic, and the *Apology* of Xenophon (which Murray accepts[1]) does not advance our knowledge much. And passing to Plato, we are faced by the whole question of elimination of non-historic elements from the number of dialogues out of which the true philosophy of his master is to be gathered. Beyond the unquestioned Socratic dialogues (as *Apologia, Euthyphro, Crito, Charmides, Laches, Lysis,* and *Protagoras*[2]) there are various others from which, according often to the philosophic predilection of the interpreter, Socratic teaching is to be gleaned. Leaving out for the moment the *Euthydemus* as in some sense a "sport," in the *Meno* there is non-Socratic doctrine, and in the great dialogues *Gorgias, Cratylus, Symposium, Phædo,* and *Republic*; while the doctrines of ideas and reminiscences can be set aside as Platonic, it is a delicate and difficult thing to say always what is a fair reading of Socratic meanings only half developed in Xenophon and in the early dialogues, and what is a real departure from his position. Even the unquestioned early dialogues present problems. If we fasten, for instance, on the *Protagoras*, a dialogue so entirely after the heart of Grote, who seemed determined to find utilitarianism and philosophic radicalism in the thought and life of Greece, the position is not free from difficulty; for where we gather such unequivocal evidence of the eudæmonism of Socrates we find also

[1] *Anc. Gk. Lit.* p. 321.
[2] Cf. Ritchie's *Plato*, Appendix II. p. 224.

the dramatic contradiction of those views which with most certainty are attributed to him, in, *e.g.*, his denial of the teachableness of virtue, the evidence for which is not rebutted by his later inconsistent argument in the same dialogue; that is to say, that on ground, apparently most sure, we are not rid of an element of uncertainty. And if it is admissible to discard the *Gorgias* as evidence for idealism in Socrates, because it so flatly contradicts the understood Socratic belief in the identity of pleasure and good, it is not illegitimate to suggest that the unmodified Hedonism, *e.g.* of the *Protagoras*, be not accepted with mere uncritical readiness as more than a sort of provisional theory of morals as opposed to conventional ethics, when admittedly even here elements of doubt present themselves.

Certain it is that whatever matter is in question, Socrates can generally bring forward utilitarian arguments for the course he himself adopts. He is quite prepared to show Antiphon[1] that poverty and hard fare possess advantages of a practical and pleasurable order over a life of softness. He is free of constraint in teaching; he need not discourse to the uncongenial, as he takes no fees: his food is wholesome if plain, and hunger sharpens his appetite. His scanty clothing promotes his hardiness; weather does not affect him. Momentary pleasures do not favour health;[2] they create insatiable demands, and bring wretchedness in after years;[3] self-control is the condition even of the lowest order of happiness;[4] and hard training fits for efficient

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. vi.
[2] *Ib.* II. i. 20.
[3] *Ib.*, *The Choice of Heracles*, II. i. 31.
[4] *Ib.* II. i. 28 *sq.*

services of many kinds, from that of the soldier[1] to that of the thinker.

It is the same in the cultivation of other virtues besides abstinence. If it were possible to put one out of conceit with the advice of this moralist, it would be very often done by the reasons subjoined to his counsels. Virtue is good practical policy, according to Socrates. This is the teaching of the composition of Prodicus on the *Choice of Heracles*, which he reproduces to Aristippus. There is no fastidiousness in enunciating the doctrine of rewards. "It is by acts of service and of kindness," he tells Aristodemus, in counselling similar action towards the gods, "that you discover which of your fellows are willing to requite you in kind."[2] The great reason for brotherly affection being preserved unbroken is the practical inconvenience and loss caused by the breach;[3] and the value of friendship is rated mainly by capacity of service.[4] The law of consequences judges the doings of men, and shows that the worst thing that can happen to anyone is to succeed in false pretensions;[5] that caprice and tyranny are punished in this life,[6] and obedience to laws written and unwritten rewarded.[7] There are inevitable results, painful and humiliating, which follow from wrong conduct; and a wise man will avoid actions which have such a recoil upon the doer.

This type of utterance does not, however, exhaust the ethical teaching of Socrates. Sometimes he speaks as if only one kind of consequence was to be considered, the effect of conduct on the soul. To range un-

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. xii. [2] *Ib.* I. iv. 18. [3] *Ib.* II. iii. 19.
[4] *Mem.* II. iv. 5; II. vi. [5] *Ib.* I. vii. 3.
[6] *Ib.* III. ix. 12. [7] *Ib.* IV. iv. 16, 21.

critically through Plato's later dialogues, in the fashion of Fouillée, and Lasaulx, and others, and to gather together sentences contradicting the apparently crude utilitarianism of the earlier dialogues and of Xenophon, as usually understood, is a comparatively easy but futile proceeding. We are not at liberty to draw our testimonies from so wide a field. But is it the case that, in Xenophon even, Socrates is eudæmonist only? The good is successful conduct (εὐπραξία). "When someone asked him: 'What he regarded as the best pursuit or business for a man?' he answered, '*Successful conduct*'; and to a second question: 'Did he then regard good fortune as an end to be pursued?' 'On the contrary,' he answered, 'for myself, I consider fortune and conduct to be diametrically opposed. For instance, to succeed in some desirable course of action without seeking to do so, I hold to be good fortune; *but to do a thing well by dint of learning and practice, that, according to my creed, is successful conduct*, and those who make this the serious business of their life seem to me to do well.'"[1] That is to say, according to this statement, success is not the measure of well-doing, but well-doing is accompanied by success. Happiness is not grasped directly, but springs out of the wisdom that teaches the uses of things.[2] "What do possessions profit a man if he have neither good sense nor wisdom?" He accepts the statement of Euthydemus as to freedom, meaning by the term moral freedom, when he says he cannot conceive a nobler or more magnificent acquisition.[3] Self-control he regards as the best thing a man can have.[4] He regards "any

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. ix. 14.
[2] Plato, *Euthyd.* 281, 282.
[3] *Mem.* IV. v. 2.
[4] *Ib.* IV. v. 8.

pleasure worth remembering" as mediated by self-control.[1] Happiness is not in the multiplication of satisfied wants, but in divine independence.[2] The toil of a high quest is comparable to the pleasure of the hunter.[3] Justice and uprightness are the conditions of successful statesmanship.[4] And there are divine laws, unwritten and self-avenging, which men must obey.[5] His ideal of virtue wears the face of wisdom, of freedom, of sobriety, of carefulness, and rests on self-conquest. Travelling by this path men reach the summit of virtue and find it the height of happiness.[6] His pupil Antisthenes considers that wealth and poverty lie not in a man's estate, but in men's souls,[7] and his own spiritual wealth he gained from Socrates.[8] The only true education is to train men;[9] and the philosopher loves noble-natured souls, alert and emulous in pursuit of virtue.[10]

If the system of Socrates be eudæmonism, it is certainly not rigid and consistent. If it were permissible to cite a dialogue like the *Gorgias*, nothing could be further away from the conclusions of, *e.g.*, the *Protagoras*, where the doctrine is virtually pure hedonism. But we cannot accept the idealistic views put into the mouth of Socrates in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* as historical. Virtue is, in the *Gorgias*, harmony of soul, analogous to bodily health. The health of the soul is righteousness or temperance,[11] and its controlling principle order and law. And the *Republic* develops more fully the same idea. In the *Gorgias* there is no

[1] *Mem.* IV. v. 9. [2] *Ib.* I. vi. 10. [3] *Ib.* II. i. 18–20.
[4] *Ib.* IV. ii. 11. [5] *Ib.* IV. iv. 19, 21. [6] *Ib.* IV. v.
[7] *Sympos.* iv. 34. [8] *Ib.* iv. 43. [9] *Ib.* viii. 23.
[10] *Ib.* viii. 41. [11] Plato, *Gorgias*, 504.

qualifying of a thing as good because it is pleasant. "The pleasant is to be pursued for the sake of the good."[1] But is this after all very far from the spirit even of some of the Xenophontic discourses[2] and of some portions of those dialogues which are unquestionably Socratic?[3] The curious pleasure Socrates took in a kind of self-depreciation and in finding utilitarian reasons for ideal actions, such as when at the end he points out the service death is doing him in[4] relieving him from the burden of the body, or when he points out to Crito the ludicrous figure an escaping philosopher[5] would cut, must be remembered in considering the full force of his teachings.

By whatever name he chose to designate the supreme good, he cannot be without more ado characterised as a happiness-philosopher unless the happiness he speaks of be understood in some large sense of self-realisation. It would not, of course, in the least alter his eudæmonism that he found happiness in freedom or in knowledge, or in denial of false or conventional wants, for many others did; so and while pure hedonists in theory and practice might marvel, as Antiphon and Aristippus did, at his discovery of happiness along the paths he chose, his singularity in preferences would not alter the fact that he made happiness the end of human attainment. The essential character of a theory is not altered by a man saying, "I find my pleasure in the intellectual life," or "I find my pleasure in the culture of my soul," if the end is pleasure. The objection to

[1] Plato, *Gorgias*, 506. [2] *E.g.* IV. ii. 31, 32, 35, 36; IV. v. 2 *sq.*
[3] *Crito*, 47 E; *Euthyd.* 288 *sq.*
[4] *Phædo*, 66 B, 67 C; Xen., *Apol. Soc.* 6.
[5] *Crito*, 53.

such distinctions has been put, once for all, in the *Philebus* by Protarchus.[1] "Do you think that anyone who asserts pleasure to be the good will tolerate the notion that some pleasures are good and others bad?" It is the argument of Socrates in the *Protagoras*, that pleasurable things so far forth as pleasurable are to that extent good.[2] Protarchus cannot understand pleasure being made the principle by which the quality of actions or causes of action must be tested; and then a further principle being introduced to test the foundation principle. It pleases Socrates continually to say that for him there is more delight in pursuing wisdom and virtue than in enjoying the pleasures of sense; but on this ground he has no philosophic case against the man who may say that he is differently built, or that he prefers life to be on more accessible levels than those trodden by the philosopher. If the standard be individual, this conclusion is manifest; if it be general consent, again it is plain that the mass of mankind have always chosen the less ideal delights. In fact, on the principle of happiness, as such, being the end of action, the wonder of Euthydemus at the rejection of it by Socrates is justified when he says: "If I am not even right in praising happiness, I must confess I know not for what one ought to supplicate the gods in prayer."[3] Nor does there seem much relevancy in the citation by Socrates of the mischiefs into which, in his view, the pursuit of happiness has led men; the obvious criticism from the popular viewpoint being, that it is not because happiness has been seen as the end pursued that these troubles have come, but

[1] Plato, *Philebus*, 13 B.
[2] *Protag.* 351 C.
[3] Xen., *Mem.* IV. ii. 36.

because it has not been pursued with sufficient apprehension of the essential methods of success, the element of calculation, the measuring of pleasure in the *Protagoras*[1] has been absent.

It does not appear that in his consideration of the question of pleasure Socrates felt constrained strictly to define whose pleasure he meant, the actor's or the community's; to say whether the action he spoke of, when he described men as seeking pleasure, was purely self-regarding, or action such as added to the general sum of happiness. Sometimes, as we have seen, he is open to an interpretation purely individual; he appears to preach egoistic hedonism. Doubtless he trusted to the nature of the happiness which he set himself to expound to guide men rightly. His happiness was in virtue. Usually when he speaks of good he seems to consider the harmonious good of all; he is an eudæmonist. Those natures that he regarded as fitted for philosophy were marked by a "passionate predilection for those studies in particular which serve to good administration of a house or of a State, and in general to the proper handling of man and human affairs. Such beings, he maintained, needed only to be educated to become not only happy themselves *and happy administrators of their private households, but to be capable of rendering other human beings as States or individuals happy also.*"[2] The work of the good leader, king or general, is to see that those who choose him "may attain to happiness through him."[3] Because he believes that happiness to be found in participation in the common life, he opposes himself[4] to interpreta-

[1] Plato, *Protag.* 356, 357.
[2] Xen., *Mem.* IV. i. 2.
[3] *Ib.* III. ii. 3.
[4] *Ib.* I. vi. 9, 14; II. i. 19, 28.

tions of the happiness theory, according to which an individual is to rid himself of all public obligations and follow solely his own comfort. It is not to be thought that happiness can be found in a sectional or parochial view of life, seeking only momentary pleasures; it is the fruit of noble toil for one's country and one's fellows. It is taken for granted that it is service of this sort which sound men should strive after,[1] service that gains the glory of a good name. The first business of a public man is to "benefit the city."[2] And the city demands as sound component parts virtuous men.[3] It is lack of devotion to the common cause that is ruining Athens.[4] And the noblest kind of life is spent in the common pursuit of moral beauty, a search in which the love of friends becomes spiritualised.[5] In view of such passages, to say that the theory of Socrates is that of a self-regarding principle throughout, is not in accordance with fact; it is not consistent with his express statements.

There is all through the reasonings, in which he appears to adopt the current standard, a certain pressure of intellectualism which is transforming it into something different and higher. However logically the Cyrenaics came to ground themselves on expressions of his in which pleasure was set forth as the end, it is certain that their forerunners in opinion, who were contemporary with Socrates, found difficulty in recognising in him a fellow-believer. To them he seemed a professor of the "art of misery,"[6] and Antiphon was not astonished that he should charge no fees

[1] Xen., *Mem.* III. xii. 5.
[2] *Ib.* III. vi. 3.
[3] Plato, *Protag.* 323 A; *Protag. loq.*
[4] Xen., *Mem.* III. v. 16.
[5] Xen., *Symp.* viii. 9 *et seq.*
[6] *Mem.* I. vi. 3.

for imparting a craft and mystery of that kind.[1] But they had not laid their account with the depth of the Socratic reflection. In that reflection there is an ideal sketched in which clear consciousness of aim decides and directs action. Haphazard success counts for nothing morally, and happiness that is not the bloom of a consciously wrought act is at best meaningless good fortune. If an act has issued in happiness, then if the moral quality of the act is decided by its results, it ought to be counted to a man for righteousness; but it is not so estimated with Socrates. It lacks the intellectual element. The act expressed no true grasp of the aim of life. Such things neither exhibit nor mould character; they are not, properly speaking, moral events at all. The pleasure which bulks so largely in the reasoning of Socrates is not pleasure of any sort and at any price. It appears often, indeed, as the aim, but its true position is not easy to fix. It seems to be sometimes a by-product of the staple virtue with which man is to occupy himself in life; and often it stands for self-fulfilment, not in the hedonist's sense, but in the sense of one who, confining himself, indeed, to the only world he knew, the Hellenic world, and to the free citizens mainly of that world, yet, within that restricted area, felt that we are members one of another. It was his view of the nature of man that fixed the shaping of his ideal.

There is at the basis of Socrates' reasoning on the aim of action a certain anthropological view of a strongly marked, if narrow and defective type. In consistency with his belief in the identity of virtue and knowledge, he holds certain views as to the nature of the

[1] *Mem.* I. vi. 11, 12.

soul, of the will, and of moral action, in process and end, of greater originality and depth than have been always accredited to him. To him, as we have seen, self-knowledge was the absolutely indispensable preliminary to any true search after right thinking and right living. And to know oneself meant really to know oneself as essentially intelligence. The maxim, "On earth there is nothing great but man, in man there is nothing great but mind," would have met with his cordial acceptance. For him the intellect overshadowed all else. This is the prime discovery, and near this lies, too, the prime defect of his anthropology. If the real man can be evoked he is intelligence, and in the successful use of his understanding is the secret of self-direction, the path of moral life. Mind in us is, he holds, a spark of the Divine wisdom. He apparently argues with Aristodemus for this participation on our part, in Divine intelligence, as he presses on him the analogy of the participation of his body in the elements of the matter of the world. "Mind, alone it would seem, which is nowhere to be found, you had the lucky chance to snatch up and make off with, you cannot tell how."[1] This soul is the invisible dominatrix[2] of the body (ἢ τοῦ σώματος κυρία ἐστίν). The Godhead "implanted in man the noblest and most excellent type of soul. For what other creature, to begin with, has a soul to appreciate the existence of the gods who have arranged this grand and beauteous universe? What other tribe of animals save man can render service to the gods? How apt is the spirit of man to take precautions against hunger and thirst, cold and heat, to alleviate disease and foster strength! how suited to

[1] *Mem.* I. iv. 8. [2] *Ib.* I. iv. 9.

labour with a view to learning! how capable of garnering in the storehouse of his memory all that he has heard or seen or understood! Is it not most evident to you that by the side of other animals men live and move a race of gods—by nature excellent, in beauty of body and soul supreme?"[1]

"Man's chief end" is decided by his nature. If his course is to be normal, self-realisation can only mean knowledge. He is not called upon to determine, "not to Live but Know"; for him knowledge *is* life, ethical and practical as well as mental life. What knowledge is this which can effect so much? For it must be clearly understood that the statements of Socrates cannot be watered down into declarations of the indispensability of clear light for right action, and so forth. He holds quite positively that there is a science such that it carries with it happiness and perfection, secures the accomplishment of an ideal that is at once mental, ethical, and emotional. This science is the science of the good. It is the science of the basic principle of the world and life. In the passage from the *Phædo*, quoted in an earlier chapter, the earnest desire of Socrates to find this principle established as the principle of nature is alluded to, and his failure to find it consistently followed is given as the cause of his disappointment with the method and results of the researches of Anaxagoras.[2] He was delighted with the theory which affirmed that mind ordered and caused all things, and argued that if this was so, then mind would order and arrange each thing in the best possible way; and to get at the cause of generation, destruction, or existence, the best mode of existence, action,

[1] *Mem.* I. iv. 13, 14. [2] *Phædo*, 97 B *sq.*

or suffering must be found. For man it was necessary to find what was best and most fitting for himself or for other things, and he would know the bad by contrast. His disappointment arose when this grand principle of the Anaxagorean philosophy came, as he felt, to lose itself in the consideration of physical causes. His firm conviction was that the world was the best of all possible worlds, and that man's nature was determined in accordance with the principle that external nature arranged all things for the best. He would not only deduce the true principles of physics from the divine perfections, but those of man's spiritual life also. His governing principle in all things was the good, in harmony with which all things were made; the knowledge of which was at once true science and moral life. Self-realisation is thus, fundamentally, illumination. It is a complex doubtless, a vision out of which practice grows and pleasure comes, yet the basal thing is knowledge. If he is allowed to put his own interpretation on happiness, then happiness is the end of life; but for him happiness is virtue and virtue is knowledge: thus we travel round again to the supremacy of knowledge.

The self-knowledge on which Socrates insisted with such emphasis was really, in the first place, an effort to get at the common mental inheritance, the stock of convictions which were at once elements of universal truth and the wealth of the individual. It is not the method of a rudimentary scientific psychology so much as introspection with direct reference to practice, which so often appears in his discourses.[1]

[1] *Mem.* IV. ii. 24 *sqq.*

"'Tell me,' he said to Euthydemus, 'have you ever been to Delphi?'

"'Yes, certainly; twice,' said he.

"'And did you notice an inscription somewhere on the temple: γνῶθι σεαυτόν (know thyself)'?

"'I did.'

"'Did you possibly pay no regard to the inscription? or did you give it heed, and try to discover who and what you were?'

"'I can safely say I did not,' he answered. 'That much I made quite sure I knew, at anyrate; since if I did not know even myself, what in the world did I know?'"

But this is precisely the easy supposition that is proving the ruin of men like Euthydemus. A man who knows himself is one who has taken at least as much trouble to find out his own requirements and capacities as the purchaser of a horse to know its points.[1] In this self-knowledge is the secret of blessing and success in the handling of human affairs, and of right relationships with others. Its true starting-point is to test one's capacity, to distinguish bad and good. This is a matter requiring true insight; neither health, nor wealth, nor even wisdom[2] of a sort is the absolute good, and the man who identifies any of these with the end of life has not true knowledge of himself.

The beginnings of this knowledge coincide with the discovery of one's own ignorance. Distrust of the com-

[1] *Mem.* IV. ii. 25.

[2] *Ib.* IV. ii. 30–33. In the view of Socrates, true wisdom carries moral achievement with it; it = σωφροσύνη, as Dakyns points out. There is a cleverness that is only a relative good.

monplaces that have done duty for thought rises up everywhere in the mind. And the need that is most clamant is the need of knowledge. No step can be taken till we know in what direction to travel towards our true end. When once instinct and custom are left, there can be no guide but knowledge. Somewhere, wrapped up in the convolutions of the mind, there is an idea that helps to make our need articulate, an idea of knowledge in the name of which we stretch forward to that which is still beyond our reach. There is, indeed, a sense in which we possess that for which we seek. It is the poetry in their souls that enables men to enter into the spirit of a great poem; it is the sympathy that is really a hidden identity of nature, that is the secret of discipleship. And Socrates makes his clearly expressed end the attainment of that knowledge the ideal of which obscurely haunts us.

One escapes from ignorance by a process of plumbing the mind, and so coming to a true understanding of one's self. There is no escape from nature, but men can seek self-realisation in mistaken or in right ways. Knowledge shows us the right ways by showing us ourselves. "Know thyself" is, in the Socratic discipline, the first commandment with promise of result. The play of our intelligence upon our nature is the beginning of wisdom. Any true admission of ignorance, the faintest consciousness of having been on the wrong path, can form the starting-point of a truer method of search. It involves something that judges our present mental possessions; the seeker of moral truth does already, germinally, possess truth. And by dialectic it can be released from its concealment, so to speak. From the common notions of men under

critical examination, elements of the universal detach themselves until the ideal end is clearly seen and pursued. No doubt, again, in passages which hold teaching of this kind, we are on the borderland between the historic and the ideal Socrates; the innateness of knowledge is about to override induction of facts, and all to be evolved from within. But what seems sufficiently clear is, even in the Xenophontic conversations, that Socrates meant to give its place to the mind in knowledge. Truth could not be received by mere authority, or in the intoxication of possession as the messages of the soothsayers. We make our own contribution to the completed result of knowledge; all we gain is conditioned by our mental make. Knowledge cannot be dropped into the mind, but depends upon its activity.

The knowledge of the good which we supremely need, according to Socrates, which he so earnestly enforces on Euthydemus,[1] is hard to come by. There are multitudes of "things" that are held to be good; but put under the rack of examination they are discovered to be relative to person, place, and time. Health may induce a man to commit himself to some foolish enterprise from which weakness might have restrained him.[2] Wisdom has led to the enslavement and death of some. Happiness, popularly supposed to be the most indisputable of blessings, must not be made to depend on any of these things; beauty, strength, wealth, and reputation have all led to the greatest calamities.[3] There is, then, some good separable from all accidents of circumstance which is supreme. This is not explained to Euthydemus at the time of his

[1] *Mem.* IV. ii. 31. [2] *Ib.* IV. ii. 32. [3] *Ib.* IV. ii. 35.

initiation into the "rough sport" of the Socratic dialectic. He is simply left, as so often the hearers of Socrates were left, in a bewilderment of negations.

"These are matters," says Socrates, "which perhaps, through excessive confidence in your knowledge of them, you have failed to examine into."

Elsewhere more light is given. The good Socrates is aiming at is something that enters into the personality as the supposed goods before enumerated do not. In another discussion with Euthydemus he makes it to be virtue in the form of freedom [1] (which he defines as the power to "perform what is best"), wisdom, "the best of all things," soundness of soul, carefulness, and devotion, and self-control. He argues that the man who has these things gains the prize of happiness, which the common Greek ethics makes to be the supreme good; for intemperance cuts men off "from the full fruition of the more obvious and constantly recurring pleasures." [2] The pleasure-hunter misses what is noblest, and becomes impelled to what is most shameful. He prematurely seeks to gain delights of appetite, while the abstinent man will "patiently abide and endure till each particular happiness is at the flood," till, that is, the moment of its legitimate gratification has been reached. Thus pleasure flies from the man who pursues it, and falls to the self-controlled. Happiness, in short, belongs to virtue.

But having identified happiness with virtue, Socrates proceeds to identify it with knowledge. "Wisdom," he had said, "is the best of all things." [3] The "beautiful and good" must be learnt; the management of health and home, the offices of friendship and the service of

[1] *Mem.* IV. v. 2 *sq.* [2] *Ib.* IV. v. 9. [3] *Ib.* IV. v. 6.

the State, are matters of "patient application to rules." "A man who foregoes all height of aim, who gives up searching for the best and strives only to gratify his sense of pleasure, is he better than the silliest of cattle?" The self-controlled alone "discover the hid treasures. These, by word and by deed, they will pick out and make selection of them according to their kinds, choosing deliberately the good and holding aloof from the evil. Thus it is that a man reaches the zenith, as it were, of goodness and happiness; thus it is that he becomes most capable of reasoning and discussion."[1] Here the various aspects of the good tend to merge into unity in the idea of knowledge. It is by knowledge of the reality of things that men pursue the good and eschew the evil, and in following this path of knowledge they win happiness. The man who knows these things in their true nature is the man who knows them "according to their kinds," their essence is revealed to him; his choice follows his knowledge. Self-control, the moral preparation for dialectic, fits him to possess this knowledge; but his knowledge becomes the instrument of moral advance. Rationality and goodness increase in direct ratio.

But the paradox, "Virtue is knowledge," is not explained by unfolding the complexity of the Socratic ideal of the good; we seem rather to move in a vicious circle, "Virtue is knowledge." What kind of knowledge? Knowledge of the good. But "the good" is virtue. Therefore the good is the knowledge of the good. To know good is to be good. Practice goes *pari passu* with science. In worship, correct practice

[1] *Mem.* IV. v. 11, 12.

will, it is assumed, necessarily follow from knowledge.[1] And bravery is born in the same manner.[2] The pious man knows what is acceptable in worship; the science of divine things is in his mind, and his worship is the art which the science yields. Similarly, the brave man knows perils, real and imaginary; he possesses a science of risks, and his brave military service or his fortitude in civic troubles or private pains and diseases, is but the application of this special knowledge. A man is not supposed to be able to have the true theory of bravery without being actually brave, or of worship while he remains irreligious. And the same holds good of other ethical qualities. Socrates does not conceive the separation of correct theory and practice to be possible.

Various reasons can, of course, be adduced for the general identification of virtue with knowledge. It is not peculiar to Socratic thought[3] to teach that each man is led to action by what seems to him the most desirable aim. Each does what he thinks best. Nor, again, is it uniquely Socratic to teach that virtue is the best, that "the good" would bring to each man most happiness. Why then, if men by the constitution of their nature must do what they feel to be most desirable, and the most desirable thing is virtue, are moral wrong and failure so prevalent? Because, Socrates answers, through ignorance men identify something with the good which is not the good. When they do wrong they are not doing it as wrong, but as good. No man wills evil.[4] He is simply, in

[1] *Mem.* IV. vi. 2–4. [2] *Ib.* IV. vi. 10, 11.
[3] Cf. H. Sidgwick, "Ethics," *Encyc. Brit.* viii. 577.
[4] *Protag.* 358 B, C, D.

doing wrong, a mistaken person, mistaken as to the means of his own happiness.[1] By the constitution of his being he must choose what is most desirable; and it is ignorance only that prevents him seeing the supreme desirableness of virtue. He "needs must choose the highest when he sees it"; but for lack of knowledge he does not see the highest, and in the blindness of ignorance chooses something that he mistakes for it.

It is never clearly worked out what the good is which, intelligently or blindly, all men seek. Really the dominating element in the conception of the good is that of finality, something viewed as the rational end of action. That is to say, that in a complex unity, including pleasure, virtue, and knowledge, the intellectual element preponderates. Goodness in men results from and is exemplified by acts in conformity with rational ends. But can a rational end not be evil? Is all intelligence enlisted in the service of goodness? Is it not possible to clearly conceive and work towards an end evil in itself and known to be evil? It is not, according to the view of Socrates, so possible. It is not that among intelligent ends some are good and some bad; strictly speaking there can be no bad intelligent end. This is stated again and again, as in the *Protagoras*:[2] "No man voluntarily pursues evil, or that which he thinks to be evil. To prefer evil to good is not in human nature; and when a man is compelled to choose one of two evils, no one will choose the greater when he may have the less." Whatever desires a man may cherish, they are really translatable into desire for the

[1] *Gorgias*, 466 D, E.

[2] *Protag.* 358 C, D.

supreme good. His nature is so constituted that it must follow what seems to him the preferable course out of whatever ways invite his entrance; he cannot but wish his own greatest good. This, of course, did he but always know it, is identical with virtue, which is not a good relative to the individual only, but which is good now and for ever, in the particular circumstances and universally, which is, shortly, the supreme good. But this coincidence of private and universal good in the supreme end, virtue, is not known to the unillumined, therefore he follows what he mistakes for his highest good; he confounds relative and momentary pleasure, contingent good with the good itself, which did he see he must follow. Hence the perpetual deceptions to which he falls a victim, a change of circumstances alone being required to change his fancied good into most real evil.[1] The difference between the virtuous man and the wrong-doer is that one has enlightened desire and knows what he chooses; the other is acting under a delusion, and confounds the momentarily pleasurable with usefulness and happiness. The end of such an examination of one's self, as Socrates desires to institute, is that men should come to know that what they are really seeking, under the varied forms which their pursuit of satisfaction takes, is the absolute good, and that they should come to seek this consciously. To know one's self is to understand the meaning of uninstructed desire. It is to cease to confound the momentarily agreeable with happiness; it is to translate the variety of human wishes into forms of search for the supreme end of life. And all that is needful to secure the

[1] *Mem.* IV. ii. 31–36.

performance of virtuous acts is illumination. The best for each individual is the best for all, as justice; something that is capable of being the highest particular end while it is also universal. Ignorance of this, that the greatest good of the individual is just the good itself, is the cause of all evil. The sinner is mistaken in his instruments. He is seeking his own best good; but, through the blindness of ignorance, identifies it with mere contingencies or real evils. He must wish his own greatest good, he must wish his own true happiness; this or that evil thing in his conduct is simply an instance of a false identification. His own greatest good is the absolute good, which is identical with virtue. This once seen, the same law that drives him to vice will drive him to virtue. What he lacks is light; to see is to obey. He has never yet been able to execute his own will. He has done evil not willing it as evil; has willed crime and vice but not as crime and vice, but as necessary means to the end—his own good. He has done that which was right in his own eyes; but his eyes have really never been opened to know good and evil. He cannot really will evil, because he cannot will his own harm. His action resolves itself into an unenlightened choice of methods to attain the end which all necessarily pursue. As a matter of fact this end, the good which all blindly or consciously pursue, is really left without scientific definition. It seems to be, as has been said, that which is the object of rational action, which the means set in motion by the mind converge upon. The bottom thing in it is rationality. Evil action is not really rational. It is resolvable into ignorance. But there is thus a kind of mental see-saw produced. Goodness

can only be set forth in terms of intellect, as that which the mind, once enlightened, inevitably chooses as the end of action. And knowledge can only be of the good. The things which men follow through passion, instinct, prejudice, or tradition, are not objects of knowledge, but of unpurified opinion. Into this conception, which Plato made his own, the Socratic conception inevitably passes. The good is that which the man whose mind is cleansed by dialectic and enlightened by knowledge seeks; and true knowledge is the science of the good.

The question of the essence of moral constraint is not closely and thoroughly dealt with. The good attracts. Ethical conduct is "beautiful" conduct. The virtuous follow "whatsoever things are lovely," but the precise point of ethical pressure is slightly handled. Socrates speaks, indeed, of the necessity which binds those who are enlightened in various places, but leaves the question of obligation unlaboured. He enlarges on the advantages of obedience to the laws, and goes so far as to identify personal justice with this legal obedience; but it appears that behind this identification is an assumption of the authority of the divinity.[1] In this view righteousness becomes a much larger thing than legal obedience. It is assumed that the "unwritten laws" of which he speaks to Hippias are everywhere known. But if they represent eternal right, it is not made plain how the earthly laws are to become their transcript; while yet, as is shown in the *Crito*,[2] such reverence is due to these earthly laws as appears to involve quasi-divine sanction. Nevertheless, as was proved

[1] *Mem.* IV. iv.

[2] *Crito*, 50 *sq.*

in his actual experience, the claim to obedience rests ultimately on a consistency between the laws of man and the laws of God.[1] Of this harmony in the last resort the individual conscience must be the judge. A subjective standard lifts itself up against the voice of the city. The final appeal is to the original experience of the individual, working legitimately through the stages of the accepted morality as having a prescriptive relative claim on the life, until reflection and experience supply a new reading of the Divine Will.

But while his moral authority runs back to the will of God, he finds a sufficient sanction within the facts of life for virtue. We cannot appeal to the language used in the *Phædo* as expressing a tendency in his teaching to make action here dependent on issues beyond life. Historically, he considered the present apparently as a system complete within itself so far as moral issues are concerned. The discussions raised and the teachings conveyed in the myths related concerning immortality must be regarded as Platonic developments of casual, or at least unsystematised, probable utterances. Limiting ourselves to Socratic matter in the sources, it is hardly possible to speak of these things as being more than this.

The defect of the Socratic quality is in the exaggeration of the intellectual element in conduct. It amounts to confusion. For what is meant by "Virtue is knowledge" passes beyond the assertion of the need of knowledge for right action to the identification of the two things. Interest and happiness alike impel to the doing of the good by him who knows

[1] *Apol.* 29.

what it is. There is no such thing as a conflict of will and intelligence. The human will in itself never errs; but it is dependent on knowledge; and it is to errors and imperfections in knowledge that the action ascribed to a vitiated will is due. As Fouillée[1] puts it: "The doctrine of Socrates comes to saying that man owes his vices to his imperfection, and his imperfection to his ignorance. His reason being merely pregnant with the truth which it encloses, in place of being a reason developed and capable of seeing all things, he does not know always the rational and absolute value of a thing or an act, and this ignorance or this error is the origin of his faults. To diminish it is to bring him into relation with the sovereign good; to make it entirely disappear would be to put him in possession of the very good identical with knowledge." Knowledge is the sum and substance of ethics, the moral law and the prophets; ignorance is not, and cannot be, virtuous.

The intellectual genesis of this teaching is undoubtedly to be found largely in the working out of accepted principles. Self-interest was universally accepted as the motive of action. It was also admitted that virtue was the greatest interest of all. If, then, a man must follow his interest, it follows that when he knows virtue to be this interest he will be virtuous. It will be as natural as drinking when one is thirsty. Hence virtue is knowledge.

There is thus an all but complete absence in the Socratic view of any consideration of the will. And here, undoubtedly, the personality of Socrates helps to decide the colour of his philosophy. Perfect health

[1] *Socrate*, i. 288, 289.

consists, as nearly as possible, in the absence of all "false centres of sensibility"; there is an exercise of function on the part of the various organs, so perfect as in many cases to be unconscious. It was very much so with the moral personality of Socrates.[1] Whatever early struggles he may have known, at the time of his mission he appears before us as a man in whom habitual obedience to duty had become instinctive and immediate.[2] It may seem an irony that the very one who was the means of making Greek virtue conscious, who denied the reality of unintelligent goodness, should be thus described; but the fact is that he had travelled round to the goal of instinctive and immediate action by the path of reflection and conscious aim, until, without ceasing to be intelligent, moral action had ceased in him to know perplexity, wavering, and conflict. Before his judges he can assert that the knowledge of being in a wrong course will, as a matter of course, at once deter him from further continuance.[3] He was able to say that to see with him was to act; habitually and normally he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision of duty.

How the doctrine, "Virtue is knowledge," failed to impress a practical mind, through its manifest ignoring of facts, is shown in the reply of Ischomachus in the *Economist*[4] (if we may take this as a Socratic discussion), to the wonder expressed by Socrates at the universal knowledge of the principles of farming not

[1] Cf. the character reading of Zopyrus, Cic. *Tusc.* iv. 37, 80.

[2] Antisthenes said: "Virtue was of itself sufficient for happiness, and was in need of nothing except the strength of Socrates," Diog. Laert. VI. i. 11.

[3] *Apol.* 26 A.

[4] XX. 2 *sq.*

producing a greater equality of agricultural prosperity. To his singular simplicity it seemed that knowledge must produce right action here, just as he believed it would in morals. But the practical farmer assigns the failures to carelessness and slackness in application, not to weakness in theory, and goes on to show how, in soldiership, many plain and universally recognised rules of warfare are simply neglected, not from want of wit and judgment, but of care and pains. Knowledge was not strong enough to overcome laziness or trust in good fortune. Men knew to do good and did it not.

Plato, too, was dissatisfied with this standpoint from which virtue is intellectualised to a degree so strained and unnatural, and his departure from it is shown in various dialogues.[1] With him virtue comes to be a harmony analogous to bodily health; it resolves itself practically into that justice whose creation is "the institution of a natural order and government of one by another in the parts of the soul";[2] or the power of good retires "into the region of the beautiful; for measure and symmetry are beauty and virtue all the world over."[3]

Nor did the mind of Aristotle find the theory any more acceptable in its entirety. He considered that a necessary condition of virtue was confused with virtue itself.[4] And in the paraphrase called the Eudemian Ethics[5] there is drawn out in addition the contrast

[1] *Gorg.* 504; *Phædo*, 69 C.

[2] *Rep.* iv. 444 D; cf. iv. 443 C, D, E, etc. [3] *Philebus*, 64 E.

[4] *Ethic. Nicom.* iii. 11. 1116*b*, 4, vi. 13. 1144*b*, 17-30; cf. *Magn. Moral.* i. 1. 1182*a*, 15-23.

[5] *Eth. Eud.* i. 5. 1216*b*, 2–25; cf. iii. 1. 1229*a*, 15; 1230*a*, 7; vii. 13. 1246*b*, 35; *Magn. Moral.* i. 1. 1183*b*, 8–18.

between theoretical and applied sciences, showing that in questions of practice what we want is not to know, *e.g.*, what bravery is, but to be brave; nor what justice is, but to be just;[1] which may be regarded as the sublimated common sense of the question. He opposes the teaching that asserts that vice is involuntary, and that knowledge is virtue.[2] However much a man's habits may supply him with motives, he is himself responsible for the formation of the character which decides his choice. His action cannot be reduced to the inevitable following of rational insight. His will is the expression of a personality which acts of choice have made. Neither, indeed, the average nor the philosophic mind has been able to accept the theory of Socrates as true to the examination of faculty or fact. As Thomson puts it, the "common sense of mankind rebels" against the theory.[3]

The doctrine of Socrates appears thus, to a great extent, to ignore the value of the volitional and emotional life. It is not the case that moral action can be eviscerated of every element except the intellectual, and man reduced to a kind of volitionless impotence, drawn here and there by the sight of an end. The tragedies of moral life could really have no place if this view were true. It is not the case that men must follow what they believe to be best for themselves, however much it may have been a popular Greek belief. It is the case that they do often the very opposite. If rationality ruled, the analysis of

[1] Cf. à Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi*, i. 1. 3: "Opto magis sentire compunctionem quam scire ejus definitionem."

[2] *Ethic. Nicom.* iii. 7. 1113*b*, 3 *et seq.*; vii. 3. 1145*b*, 21 *sq.* etc.

[3] Introduction to *Gorgias*, p. viii.

human action would be so much easier; but it does not, and much that men do cannot be reduced to a system of intelligent motive. Socrates thought it could. Paul the saint and Horace the man of the world knew it could not. And this is a matter ultimately to be settled by the testimony of experience. It is certain that the theory of Socrates, whatever merit it possesses, is not wide enough to cover the facts of moral life. It assumes, contradictorily, the rationality of action that is elsewhere shown to be abnormal.[1] The wrong-doer is a person acting strictly up to his light. He answers precisely to the ordinary conception of a virtuous man. He goes wrong for want of light only; he cannot sin against it. Now it has been argued that the very conception of evil is that of something strictly incapable of being rationalised, the element intractable to a perfect intellectual conception of things, the surd in human conduct; that if men were always inclined to do what they knew to be best for them, then this account of human action given by Socrates might remain satisfying; however impossible to reconcile with his other statements, all difference of moral conduct might be referable to differences of mental enlightenment; but that if wrong-doing is essentially irrational, this theory breaks down, evil becomes reducible to moral insanity, and the action of the wrong-doer no more necessarily follows well-defined law than the caprices of a lunatic. All incipient sociologies may seem to be against this; much moral evil may seem as orderly in its course as virtuous action. It springs up in certain sets of circumstances; it has well understood antecedents and

[1] *Mem.* IV. v. 11.

consequences; it may be within certain limits more capable of reduction to system than other matters about which we cherish no despondency of the ultimate victory of science. A prediction concerning the prevalence of crime within a certain period and over a defined area is more reliable than many weather forecasts. However this may be, and whatever hope we hold of reaching a perfect science of man, individual and social, we can never get beyond the testimony of experience in our study of moral action,—and that testimony witnesses with the utmost clearness to the recognition by men of the better at the very moment that they choose to follow the worse. They do not act rationally; they do not do what they think best; they are not true to themselves, but in spite of a knowledge that condemns their action they yield to the temptation to do wrong. Socrates says no one does what he thinks evil to himself, and history and experience answer that men do it continually. Passage after passage can be quoted expressive of the conscious conflict of desire and reason:

. . . "Aliudque cupido
Mens aliud suadet."

(Desire counsels me in one direction, reason in another.)

Ovid.[1]

. . . "Video meliora proboque
Deteriora sequor."

(I see the better part and approve it; but I follow the worse.)

Ovid.

[1] This and the following sentences are quoted by Godet, *Com. Rom.* ii. 53.

"Scibam ut esse me deceret, facere non quibam,"
(miser)

(I knew what I ought to be, but unhappy that I am I could not do it.)

Plautus.

ὁ ἁμαρτάνων ὃ μὲν θέλει, οὐ ποιεῖ, καὶ ὃ μὴ θέλει, ποιεῖ.

(He who sins does not what he would, and does what he would not.)

Epictetus.

Paul's "To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not," and many another. How reason can come to act irrationally no one has ever satisfactorily shown, yet the fact is certain; and if men do not yield to the domination of an element really alien to their nature, they do so misuse that nature that, in full use of the light of reason, they act irrationally; "the house of reason is divided against itself." A sinner uses his intellect to pursue his wrong aim, but it is a perversion, an unintellectual use. He is not himself. To come to one's self, to be normal, is to come to goodness. To repeat: On what principle human nature can be guilty of such irrationality as to decline the guidance of its highest interest, and how to reach a true philosophy of evil, are questions that still await solution. It was, doubtless, exceedingly tempting to suppose that knowledge was an all-sufficient principle of moral life, and that when the true end was seen, human nature moved towards it with the inevitability of mechanical law. But the matter is less simple. Socrates argued that the vision of virtue made men virtuous. Saints and sinners alike say that they agree with all he has to say about this vision of virtue, except with the one

thing he most insists on, its power to secure its own fulfilment. Men like Paul say they have seen Virtue, have felt her authority and beauty, have recognised that it is their own interest to be her votaries, and have been unable to obey her call. It would be a bold thing to say to such spirits: "You have never seen Virtue at all, or the sight would have transformed you." The assumption is that men must obey their interest. If there were no deflection from the normal at the root of their nature, this might be so. But if there is such an abnormality, if the action of the wrong-doer in the last resort is the result of "the house of reason being divided against itself," a conscious submission to that which contradicts knowledge, the theory is falsified.

It is not possible to eviscerate all moral conflicts of their tragic meaning by denying, as Socrates did in all such cases, the fact of knowledge, reducing it to the illusion of opinion, and asserting that in fuller light the distracted mind would have seen the identity of the object of its desire with virtue, and have chosen virtue. The Socratic view of sin, in fact, keeps it in a region subliminal to knowledge. The sinner is never really more than an instinctive man, an undeveloped, irrational creature; strictly speaking, not a man at all. But the falsity here is in the denial of the reality of the most obvious thing in experience. As a matter of fact, a man does not sin with a section of his nature. If the question be whether he can do so in the region of the lower life—the answer is, that for man there is no pure and simple lower life at all. The whole question of wrong-doing involves the central personality. It is just knowledge that makes moral

experience possible; without it there is neither sin nor its possibility. So far, therefore, from it being a true account of evil to reduce it to ignorance, it rests on an inadequate conception of the nature of those acts of intemperance which, in the view of Socrates, make a man no better than the "silliest of cattle."[1] The real evil in offences against self-control is that the passions in man, to paraphrase a great living teacher,[2] are not simply irrational; they are not mere irruptions into the life of a rational being of elements from an altogether alien sphere, but they are activities of a self which, just because it is rational, can never in its yielding to evil be merely "simple, sensuous, and passionate." The light which the sinner uses to tread the path of dalliance with evil is in itself divine, and he turns it to darkness. He uses his reason to sin against reason. And thus man's perversions can become monstrous and abnormal, because they are the acts of a creature who cannot but be complex in all he does; whose simple physical acts are in a network of rational and moral relations, who can sin, *e.g.*, by excessive or deficient rest or toil, or who can "eat and drink to the glory of God."

The theory of Socrates, strictly interpreted, makes no allowance for incipient and progressive moral life. Strictly speaking, Socratic virtue can know no degrees. It cannot exist without knowledge; but once knowledge is present, like Athena it springs into full-blown perfection of life. It knows no grades of semi-consciousness and imperfection. Man's one

[1] *Mem.* iv. v. 11.

[2] Cf. Caird, *Evolution of Theol. in Gk. Phil.* ii. 106, 112, on the Stoic view.

prayer should be the prayer of Ajax for light. But light once given, he anticipates not death, but conquest. Now, this is simply to shut out of view the larger part of the moral world. Insistence upon it reduces Socrates to a kind of moral Elijah, saying, "I only am left." As has been shown by the writer just quoted, the virtue of childhood and of most men is just this simple virtue of habit[1] which Socrates disallows.[2] No doubt even the unconsciousness thus disallowed is only relative. Before the stage of moral manhood is reached, which can recognise no law but one self-imposed, there is a certain reaction of the mind on the standards to which it submits; the morality of the latter becomes touched with a spiritual element before it becomes characteristically spiritual. But this is nothing else than the germinal or growing presence of that element which Socrates seems to deny to all morality that is not fully reflective and conscious. Ideal morality is, in a word, the only morality. Ethical character is to be denied[3] to every act not performed in the full light of perfect knowledge. So put, it is easy to feel the partial character of the view. Men did right before they could formulate a science of ethics, just as they spoke correctly before grammars were written. In some of his utterances Socrates seems conscious of this. If we might cite, *e.g.*, the *Meno* on this point without passing beyond his his-

[1] Caird, *Evolution of Theol. in Gk. Phil.* i. 71 *sq.* Cf. also Zeller, *Plato*, 448 (Eng. trans.).

[2] It is admitted, *e.g.*, in the *Charmides* that Charmides possesses the virtue of temperance, though neither he nor Socrates can define it satisfactorily (157 D, 175 D, E, 176 A), and its value is consequently depreciated as fugitive or unreal.

[3] Cf. Caird, *op. cit.* p. 73.

toric opinions, it is shown there how dialectic releases from its mental swathings the truth involved in the common unconscious life, and makes it explicit.[1] But here we are passing over into Platonism.

The conclusion to which one is led is, that Socrates was so possessed by his main aim—to make morality reflective—that he could see nothing of value short of this, and could understand no imperfection if this were present. Knowledge is to him what love is to the Christian, "the fulfilling of the law." And it is as if one were to affirm the actual perfection of the life that loves because the seed of all perfection is present in it, and to deny all worth to the service of those from whom "perfect love" has not yet cast out fear. The expression of the discovery that for men the ultimate law was one within, took, inevitably, from the circumstances of the time, and the mould of the thinkers' nature, an exaggerated intellectual form in the doctrine "virtue is knowledge." But this does not detract from the greatness of the service that gained so much of truth, by seizing on the condition of moral manhood, and turning men from prescription and convention to the reading of their own souls.

[1] Cf. Caird, *op. cit.* p. 100.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE TEACHING—*continued.* PARTICULAR VIRTUES

SOME indication must be given of the detailed working-out of the Socratic teaching in the various relations of life. The impression gathered from the discussion of his rationalistic basis of ethics may be, that the practical moral reformer and educator is hidden by the speculative thinker; but to rest in this view would be wrong. The dialogues of search, no doubt, emphasise one side of his activities; but there was another side presented to those who heard him, as Xenophon affirms he often did, discourse on the right attitude of the individual man to self, to others, and to God; or who sought from him light and guidance in the particular exigencies of practical life.

*The Egoistic moral end.*—And to begin with the self; there is no duty on which Socrates has spoken worthier words than on that due consideration of one's self which we mean when we use the term self-respect. He declines, at his trial, to use the customary appeals of defendants, who, as he said to his judges, abase themselves unworthily to save their necks, "as if they would be deathless unless you slew them."[1] "For my

[1] *Apol.* 35 A.

own credit, and for your credit, and for the credit of our city, I do not think it well, at my age, and with my name, to do anything of that kind."[1] The hard thing is, not to escape death, this can often be done if a man will debase himself by playing the coward; it is to escape sin. Wickedness is swift; yet, caught by slow death, Socrates knows that he is saving his life, while his successful accusers have been overtaken by their swift pursuer.[2]

Closely connected with this reverence for the soul is the candour which marked him, and held a conspicuous place in his counsels. No doubt there are times when a spirit of sophistry and contradiction manifests itself,—and in a kind of petulance he argues "for victory," or even against his own frequently expressed views; as when, with Nicomachides, the disappointed soldier, who as candidate for the post of general has been passed over in favour of an inexperienced man of wealth, he argues against his own favourite doctrine of committing matters to the expert, and for the adaptability of talent. Still, in practice as in teaching, he stands out as a lover and servant of truth. He desires to be faithful to the argument, no matter whither it may lead. He is able to say to his opponents in discussion: "I am a fellow-searcher with you all, insomuch that if there seems to be anything in what my opponent says, I shall be the first to yield the point. . . . And if you refute me, I shall not get vexed with you as you do with me, but shall set you down as my greatest benefactor."[3] This is characteristic. Truth is the greatest good. Untruth means confusion and hurt to the soul. And the man who reverences the soul, the divine within himself, will follow truth.

[1] *Apol.* 34 E (Church). [2] *Ib.* 39 A, B. [3] *Gorgias*, 506 A, C.

This self-reverence, which involves reverence for truth, dwells hard by self-control. He preached the stern joy of mastery over everything that might be an entanglement or hindrance to the mind. Temperance was indispensable to freedom. Sunk in pleasures, men could neither see nor follow virtue. The disorder in their life sprang from the confusion of their inner nature; and this, again, was increased and intensified by intemperate acts. In various passages, of which use has already been made, this disorder and its moral effects have been described.[1] Temperance sets free the mind for the pursuit of wisdom; it secures the highest pleasures; it is the foundation of capacity of all worthy kinds. It is the "best thing a man can have," and he who is without it has "no concern at all with virtue." At times, Socrates speaks as if mere abstinence were admirable;[2] but this is in the midst of a defence of his course of life to Antiphon, which becomes a polemic against luxury; the normal ideal toward which he directs men is mastery, sitting light to things, "using the world as not abusing it." He claims and proves that he can enjoy the pleasures of life as much as anyone, but they never hold him. Napoleon's advice to his brother Joseph was, "I have but one word to say to you, Be master." It was this counsel that Socrates anticipated. He could not control the solicitation or impact of circumstance, but he did control his own response and reaction. He was in his world; yet never merely of it, but above it.[3] He "considered the end," and took whole views of life.[4]

[1] Xen., *Mem.* IV. v. 6, 11, etc. [2] *Ib.* I. vi. 10.
[3] *Ib.* IV. v.; I. v. vi. etc.; cf. pictures in the two *Symposia*.
[4] *Ib.* II. i. 34.

In this connection it must be said that from unguarded expressions, inferences that are unwarranted with reference to the personal character of Socrates have been drawn. These aspersions have been already touched upon, and here it can only be said that it is vain, once for all, to seek in the Athens of the fifth century B.C. the conception of physical holiness that belongs to Christianity. As regards his own life, no charge of moral evil can be sustained. If there was one thing more than another that impressed his companions, it was his inaccessibility to the coarser temptations of Greek life. But when this is said, the fact remains that both he and his disciple Plato allowed themselves a liberty of speech, jesting, satirical, or illustrative, touching the moral pestilence of the time that in that age led in some instances to a supposition that vice was regarded with levity; and that in a Christian age, to use Mr. Murray's expression, "gives most modern readers a cold turn." There was no manifest shrinking at mention of sin. There was strenuous effort, by the use of every weapon in the philosophic armoury, to turn men to the nobleness of a spiritual passion for truth, and love for its seekers. Yet there was for the hardness of the Athenian heart a laxity in the standard erected, and it was the peril and attendant harms of wrong-doing that were dwelt on rather than its essential guilt. It was an imprudent thing; it argued a low mind; it involved men in humiliating and degrading situations. The Greek ideal, in a word, is one thing, and Christian purity another.

Self-knowledge wrought in this Greek teacher the non-Greek virtue of humility. It is in the intellectual

region that its manifestations appear; in the constant confessions of ignorance accompanying the strenuous demand for science as the only way to virtue. In the conversations reported by Xenophon this mood is not marked. There is a kind of oracular sureness rather noticeable which, in its unqualified form, we cannot but feel to be most unlike the Socrates of the dialogues of search. Each attitude has doubtless its relative justification. One painting is of the philosopher earnestly seeking the scientific basis of morals; the other, the moral reformer and teacher dealing with practical problems. In any case, the expression of the mood of self-depreciation takes an intellectual cast. He would not have admitted that he had not done his duty as a soldier when called upon; on the contrary, before his judges he refers to his services with the consciousness of having deserved well of his country; yet, when it is a question of discovering what courage is, without which knowledge, on his own philosophic principles, a man cannot be brave, he confesses failure.[1] Elsewhere, he is more convinced and more confident. But of mental limitation and error complaint is often elicited. "I know very well that I am not wise, even in the smallest degree,"[2] is his remark on learning the famous answer of the oracle about himself; and after the experience of a life spent in the search for truth he says, "I believe that only God is really wise: and that by this oracle he meant that men's wisdom is worth little or nothing. I do not think that he meant that Socrates was wise. He only made use of my name, and took me as an example, as though he would say to men,

[1] *Laches*, 199 E. [2] *Apol.* 21 B (Church).

'He among you is the wisest who, like Socrates, knows that in very truth his wisdom is worth nothing at all.'"[1]

But no consciousness of ignorance or failure, at other times and in other acts, prevented the strongest perseverance in the course that appeared right to Socrates. He was at any moment prepared to stand against the mass of his fellows, if he saw his own path clearly. Instances of such independent action have been cited, such as the trial of the generals after Arginusæ,[2] the arrest of Leon of Salamis;[3] and the supreme instance of his unconquerable courage at his trial, when he declares that nothing will induce him to depart from his life-mission of instructing his countrymen, choosing to obey God rather than men, is familiar to everybody. These acts were simply embodiments of principles taught throughout a life.[4] The number of those who held an opinion did not make it more respectable in his eyes. Nor when a course of action was suggested to him by friends, did his regard for the speakers influence his decision. It was harder to resist friends than enemies, perhaps, yet he resisted them, if their counsel seemed unworthy,[5] as when he declined their help to escape, referring Crito to the decision, not of the mob, but of the expert in justice, and declaring that for himself the voice of the laws, to which he owed so much, drowned all other pleadings.

*Society as a moral end.*—The strength of righteous self-assertion, the proved capacity for the per-

[1] *Apol.* 23 A, B (Church).
[2] Xen., *Mem.* I. i. 18; IV. iv. 2.
[3] *Apol.* 32 C.
[4] Xen., *Mem.* IV. vii. 1.
[5] *Crito* 48 A, 54 D.

formance of a lonely task, characteristic of Socrates, did not spring from lack of estimation of the value of human relationships, natural or conventional. One's kinsfolk, one's friends, and one's city are ends and means at once of virtuous life. It is not in severance of these ties that the man who follows goodness will find the object of his quest, but in finding and realising their true significance. Filial piety not only has its place among the unwritten laws which all men recognise,[1] but it is one of those things in dealing with which the coincidence of human law with the divine (which is the assumption of the discussion with Hippias) is marked.[2]

Brotherly affection, too, is prescribed in the very fact of the natural relationship; reciprocal service and helpfulness belong to it as surely as to the hands and feet and eyes of a man. The "natural craving and sympathy" between creatures reared together is to be made the basis of a union rich in mutual advantage. Socrates wants the natural relationship to be spiritualised by being made the basis of friendship and affection, fed by a sense in each of the worth of the other,[3] and the value of the union.

His general position with reference to the question of woman's capacity and claims, and to a much less degree his ideas on marriage, were in advance of his time. Whatever importance we attach to statements of his personal indebtedness to Aspasia[4] and Diotima[5] as his teachers, it is tolerably clear that his matrimonial experiences had not affected the disinterestedness of his speculations on the subject. He sustained

[1] Xen., *Mem.* IV. iv. 20. [2] *Ib.* II. ii. 13, 14. [3] *Ib.* II. iii.
[4] Plato, *Menex.* 235 E. [5] *Symp.* 201 D; Xen., *Mem.* II. vi. 36.

the thesis of woman's great capacity to acquire even physical accomplishments, making the somewhat extensive reservation that all she wants is strength and judgment.[1] And in capability of culture we may perhaps, with justice, regard even the education prescribed for women in the *Republic* as the result of a genuinely Socratic theory working in the mind of Plato, and wrought out into details sufficiently remote from the original germ, but in conformity with the general scheme of his ideal State.[2] Such inferiority as attaches to women is limited to physical strength and intellect,[3] and does not affect her moral capacity, although Plato in his later writing carries it into this also. Nevertheless, for Socrates the congenial sphere of woman remained ordinarily the home; the late Platonic developments of the question are alien to the domestic framework of the *Economist* (*e.g.*), in which a pleasing picture of a Greek home is drawn, which yet does not pass beyond strictly conventional limits for its assumed unusual success and happiness.[4] Its unconventionality is in the perfect sympathy between husband and wife in the management of their affairs, in helpful division of labour, in constancy of affection, and advance in personal worth.[5] The Xenophontic rather than Socratic character of much of the *Economist* need not prevent the acceptance of this picture as representing the narrowest view, possibly, of the Socratic position on this matter. The wife of Ischomachus is essentially a child trained by him, and becoming under

[1] Xen., *Symp.* ii. 9.
[2] Plato, *Rep.* v. 451 *sq.*; cf. *Protag.* 342 D.
[3] Xen., *Œcon.* iii. 11–16; *Symp.* ii. 12.
[4] *Œcon.* vii.–x.
[5] *Ib.* vii. 42.

the training a brisk manager while retaining a constant affection for her teacher, a dependent woman with an infusion of intelligence. The joys of home which Ischomachus possessed so fully did not fall to the lot of Socrates; nor was he himself a domesticated person. This was one of the subjects on which his teaching was perhaps more purely theoretical than others. The banter of Antisthenes as to the scope for experiment in education at home is not quite successfully turned;[1] and one cannot imagine Socrates and Xanthippe in the respective parts of Ischomachus and his docile child-wife. Yet, however little he may have been able to exemplify his theories, from his doctrine of knowledge as that which gave moral substance to a life, it is impossible but that his view of woman should have departed from current ideas.

One of the great services Socrates rendered to his age was to teach the consecration of companionship. His disciples were friends who joined him in his pursuit of truth, and he himself had a genius for friendship.[2] It is a little difficult to conciliate with the purely intellectual conception of virtue the importance in practice attached to the association of friends in that philosophic study which is to issue in virtuous attainment. It may even be regarded as the practical corrective of a too abstract theory; a concession made to the emotional life. True friendship he regarded as a treasure,[3] although, according to the *Lysis*, professing himself unable to define it. He is disposed to listen to the poets, who assert that it is "God Himself who makes men friends by leading them one to another."[4]

[1] Xen., *Symp.* ii. 10.
[2] Plato, *Lysis*, 211 E.
[3] *Ib.* 212 A.
[4] *Ib.* 214 A (Wright).

He is perplexed by the mystery of affinities, and is obliged to leave the problem unsolved; although a concrete instance of friendship is before him in Lysis and Menexenus, as there is of temperance in the case of Charmides.

The theme is pursued farther in the *Phædrus* and *Symposium*, but in poetic and mystic fashion, so that we cannot tell how much of the real Socrates appears. In Xenophon, the utterances regarding friendship are of a hortatory and practical character. For him, friendship is at once a pledge to pursue the highest things, an instrument of attaining them, and the reward of the pursuit. The charm a man must use to win a true friend must be the charm with which the great men of Athens won the attachment of the city, service.[1] If we want good friends, we ourselves must be persons worthy of friendship.

"'You would imply, Socrates, would you not,' says Critobulus, 'that if we want to win the love of any good man, we need to be good ourselves in speech and action?'

"'And did you imagine that it was possible for a bad man to make good friends?'"

It is "the élite of human kind" that true friendship unites. They are prepared to share their possessions; they are peacemakers, self-restrained, devoid of envy,[2] ready to render service; they rejoice in the good deeds of their friends, and in their prosperity, as much as in their own; they consider manly qualities to consist in being able to "excel friends in kindness and foes in hostility."[3] If Socrates is to introduce his friend

[1] Xen., *Mem.* II. vi. 13.
[2] *Ib.* II. vi. 22 *sq.*
[3] *Ib.* II. vi. 35; cf. *ib.* II. i. 19.

Critobulus to anyone who is a desirable person to know and to have for a friend, he will not "forge any pretty fiction for his benefit." There is only one solid ground to build on in the making of friendships or moulding a career: "*In whatsoever you desire to be esteemed good, endeavour to be good.*"[1] A man ought to ask himself, "What, after all, may I chance to be worth to my friends?"[2] Socrates' own exemplification of his principles is shown in practical counsel in various exigencies.[3]

There is something a little prosaic, perhaps, in the pictures of friendship painted by Socrates. Its services, its practical benefits in times of trouble, its aid in political careers, its stimulus in personal achievement and the upbuilding of character, are much dwelt on. The arguments seem to lack "a gracious somewhat." No genuine friendship is cemented merely by such considerations. It begins in trivial incidents sometimes; for reasons that defy analysis. It is a thing born of a monition, an inspiration. Its continuance is not a question of a superior order of barter. The great instances of friendship are, in many cases, unions of opposites. Men have followed different factions in politics, have fought under different standards even, without ceasing to be friends. And under the same flag differences can be wide without disloyalty. A Cimourdain can condemn a Gauvain, and can die with him as easily as he could have died for him. But the supreme service is a personal offering, as it is the supreme attraction. The cause and end of friendship are in the personalities, and not in acts or services so much, as separable from these. "I will

[1] *Ib.* II. vi. 38. [2] *Ib.* II. v. 4. [3] *Ib.* II. vii. viii. ix. x.

receive from" my friends "not what they have, but what they are." Yet it is in the enrichment fellowship between the worthy carries that friendship finds its justification. And it may well be that forms of expression rather than the essential thought are to blame for the remoteness of some of the Socratic maxims from modern feeling. Men read new meanings in the word "virtue"; but when the expanded ideal is allowed for, it is this translation of communion into character that is the Socratic thought.[1]

A wider circle embraces the community. So much has been said on this incidentally to other matters that the less is necessary here. It was the peculiarity of the emphasis Socrates was bound by the nature of his philosophy to lay on individual reflection, that he must appear a nonconformist in the Greek State. He accepted the State as having a claim upon his service, very wide and deep; but ultimately that claim must be submitted to a subjective standard of reference; it must justify itself before the inner court. Reflection must play upon the sacred demand of a Greek State upon the obedience of its citizens. Yet only in the name of that which requires absolute obedience, the voice of God, did even Socrates think of disputing the deliberate collective will expressed in the institutions of his native city. Every claim to obedience, that is to say, but the highest, belonged to Athens; and even the highest itself, in the absence of that intuition in which the Divine Will became clear to him as opposed to the State's command; for in the *Crito* the voice of God and the voice of the Laws are one. Ordinarily the claim of the State is recognised and met by Socrates

[1] *Symp.* viii. 10–14.

with loyal obedience. He accepts that message of the personified Laws that places their own worth and sacredness before that honour which is due to parents or ancestors; reverence and full submission to all prescribed service or suffering must be paid to them, or their commands must be shown to be unjust.[1] He does not suppose himself able to lead his country to a higher level of life save by faithfully fulfilling all relative claims. He has a conception in his mind of a State in which each man contributes to the common good, and living in it, "finds himself" in the larger life of his city. The trouble is often that political elections to office are made on the principle of the choice of the trees: they fail to secure the olive, the vine, or the fig-tree, and end by petitioning for the thorn to be their ruler; and the issue is destruction. To Socrates it seemed often that the best hung back from political life, or were passed over. And so he made it his business, while restraining some, to incite others to enter the arena. As he said to Charmides:[2] "Success in the sphere of politics means that not only the mass of our fellow-citizens, but your personal friends, and you yourself, last but not least, will profit by your action." If his ordinary service to the State (for he distinctly regarded his teaching mission as such) was rather that of the candid critic and faithful friend, not afraid to wound, than that of the active politician, it must be remembered that while "he took no part in public life," such duties as fell upon him were discharged with the utmost devotion.[3] And so long as he spent his time training the minds of men, many of whom might fill offices of State, he considered that he was

[1] *Crito*, 51. [2] Xen., *Mem.* III. vii. 9. [3] *Apol.* 28, 32.

not himself open to the charge which he brought against his friend Charmides of neglecting the post of civic duty.[1]

In dealing with the trial and death of Socrates it will be necessary to show how his philosophic theories contained from the first the germ of opposition to the State which ended in his death. Here it is only needful to say that his general loyalty did not exclude, but in his own view demanded the freest criticism of the ordinary Athenian political methods. All improvements were incidental to the one reform of true education for men, leading them to right conceptions, and consequently, in his view, right practice,[2] in all the aspects and fields of operation of virtue. But such an understanding of the State's radical need of people with a changed outlook and a new disposition would be followed by very radical changes of method. In some passages [3] changes of military policy are even suggested, though here one cannot be sure that it is not the cavalry officer Xenophon who is speaking; but, constantly, changed methods are in view. The idea of Socrates is that government is a craft and mystery to be exercised by the expert, meaning by that one morally as well as mentally fit for rule.[4] The constant theme of his discourses is the absurdity of men consenting to be ruled, or taking part in ruling, without expert knowledge, when the man who claimed to practise or teach the art of the lute-player or the physician

[1] *Gorgias*, 521 D. [2] Zeller, *Socrates*, p. 169.

[3] Xen., *Mem.* III. iii. 14; III. v. 14, 25–28.

[4] Cf. Zeller, *loc. cit.*; Xen., *Mem.* III. vi. 16–18; Plato, *Apol.* 36 C; *Symp.* 216 A, etc. Knowledge, of course, in the full sense, carries both qualifications in itself.

without this knowledge would be scouted as a quack. In practice, this theory tended to work out towards oligarchy,[1] which Socrates doubtless meant to be a kind of cultured Whiggism; whereas the oligarchies, which from time to time obtained power in Greek cities that, like Athens, were ordinarily democratic, were not composed of experts in governing, of the most capable students of politics, but simply of some of the most influential and wealthy citizens who in a crisis could grasp the reins of power. Theories are apt to take embodiments that are startling to their originators, and in some dim way the democratic citizens of Athens seemed to see in these ideas of Socrates the intellectual seed of oligarchical revolution. Whatever their philosophical claims, they pointed pretty plainly to sweeping changes if adopted by any considerable number of able men. All Xenophon's minimising of the philosophic originality of Socrates, by presenting him mainly in the rôle of moralist and preacher, quite fails to disguise this radical principle, that the State and everything else which claims a man's devotion must submit to a process of subjective criticism. In the last resort a man's inner judgment is to carry the day over every other law. No law, that is, is law to him until it has received the ratification of the mind. He will not actively resist; he will not evade penalty by flight; but he will refuse to obey. He will find in this passive resistance a method of meeting the relative claim of the city and the absolute claim of God.

Various attempts have been made to vindicate for Socrates a general ethical doctrine of humanity, and

[1] Forchhammer.

to make him anticipate Stoic universalism. It is, perhaps, passing somewhat beyond what the sources warrant to say that "he saw above the State the great human family of which the city is merely the picture in little," or, to speak without qualification, of him "recognising himself as a citizen of the world."[1] It is nearer the truth to say that ordinarily it is the moral world of the Greek State that lies within his purview. His principles would have carried him beyond this limit had they been logically wrought out; for the basing of virtue on knowledge involves the capacity of virtue wherever reason is present, and to the moral manhood thus created the rights and privileges of men could not have been denied. A certain consciousness of this seems to colour his allusions to slavery. The slavish spirit in itself constitutes, indeed, the antithesis of all nobility, and is with him a usual term of condemnation. And the ordinary acquisition, disposal, and discipline[2] of slaves is alluded to by him without comment or exception. Nor does the customary tone repel him.[3] But yet towards the slave a note of humaneness appears; he shows them as possessing qualities which if they can exhibit, much more ought the freeman to possess, or manifesting faults which in their owners are still more blameworthy.[4] Xenophon represents him in the *Economist* as approving the system of promotion by merit and stimulus by reward adopted by Ischomachus on his farm,[5] where he intrusts responsibility to men thus

[1] Faure, *La Morale de Socrate*, p. 247.
[2] Xen., *Mem.* II. i. 15, 16, cf. II. iv. 1–3, 5.
[3] *Ib.* II. vii. 3, 4; cf. II. x. 2, 3.
[4] *Ib.* III. xiii. 3, 4, 6.
[5] *Œcon.* xii. 5 *sq.*

selected; and in cases where he finds that trust honoured, treats his slaves like men.[1] It is a mistake to say that "in the *Republic* Socrates suppresses slavery without saying anything";[2] for, first, in the *Republic*, as Jowett[3] says, "The citizens, as in other Hellenic States, are really an upper class; for although no mention is made of slaves, the lower classes are allowed to fade away into the distance, and are represented in the individual by the passions." And, secondly, if it were true, the emancipator would not be Socrates but Plato.

[1] *Œcon.* xiv. 10.

[2] Fouillée, *op. cit.* ii. 55.

[3] *Dialogues of Plato*, III. clxxii. Cf. Grant, *Greece in the Age of Pericles*, p. 221.

# CHAPTER VIII

## THE TEACHING—*continued.* RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE

By the testimony of his principal disciples, the whole life of Socrates was pervaded by *the thought of God.* And the unity of that life cannot be legitimately broken up. Its ethics were not separate from its religion. A moral duty, finding reward in its own fulfilment, found a religious sanction. An act of wrong, while sinning against self-avenging laws, was an act of impiety. Socrates would not have understood anyone treating him as an independent moralist. His religion was moral (as much Greek religion was not), and his morality religious. It was the sane religion of one who had found a faith that could bear the examination of his mind. For purposes of orderly treatment it is needful to separate the handling of his religious belief and practice from his ethics, but it is under the proviso laid down. His doctrine of God and man, and their relations, the life springing out of these relations, and the question of its perpetuity, fall to be noticed.

A man of faith has a religion before he has a reasoned theology; and so, no doubt, had Socrates. But as he comes before us, it is as one who has reasoned and

wrought his way to a rational creed. Two things were united in him, a speculative intellect and a nature responsive to moral claims. The activity of his mind, playing upon the popular creed, secured his liberation from it, and fashioned for him certain elements of a new and more spiritual faith; and by the loyalty with which he practised every duty deduced from his purified creed, his religious life grew into a fabric of simple but solid structure, which no storm of doubt or temptation was able to overturn. This was not a temperamental result, though some of his own contemporaries seem to have confounded resignation with natural placidity.[1] It was not because, like Bunyan's rather unsympathetic friend who could not helpfully counsel the dreamer, he was "a stranger to much conflict with the devil," for there was a passionate nature in Socrates, but because his nature was reined and subdued by the power of a faith that was not at odds with reason.

It is needful to inquire, then, how far he had disentangled himself from the common beliefs of the Greek religion, whose customs he still followed, and whose language he continued, if in a spirit of accommodation, still to use. Xenophon is careful to impress his use of sacrifice and divination upon us, and dwells also upon the character of his prayers. If Socrates was a Luther in insisting upon putting his own interpretation upon the facts of religion, in thrusting men back upon original experience, he was an Erasmus in reforming from within. He had no ambition to start a new sect. He had a true desire to reform Greek religion. Whether his ideas involved revolu-

[1] *Crito*, 43 : "I have been wondering to see how sweetly you sleep." Crito to Socrates a day or two before his death.

tion or not will appear. Sometimes he seems to dwell within old limits almost with contentment; he speaks the language and uses the practices of his fellow-worshippers; yet examination shows us that he does all with a difference. It is true that he sometimes spoke of "the gods"; he approved the practice of divination; he offered sacrifice publicly and privately, and prayed to the gods, as Xenophon, who labours to prove his orthodoxy, is careful to show; yet neither his belief in the Deity, nor his reverence for oracles, nor his observance of sacrifice and prayer, meant to him what such a thing meant to an ordinary Greek.

Certainly his language concerning these matters was not, in the letter, consistent. Sometimes he was loose and unscientific;[1] and sometimes, with a popular use of terms for the Deity, in the same connection occurs a more exact use implying unity.[2] Sometimes he uses a word like the Godhead,[3] in which an abstraction becomes concrete, and again he uses the singular "God,"[4] or a singular term to describe God.[5] But it is when we come to the meaning he assigns to such terms, his notion of the attributes and activities of the Divine Being, whether uttered in terms of plurality or unity, that his separation from current polytheism is seen. He rejects as incredible the stories of blood and lust and deceit with which Greek mythology was disfigured; no authority of orthodoxy or tradition will

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. i. 9; I. iii. 3; IV. iii. 13, etc.

[2] *Ib.* I. iv. 16–18; I. iv. 5, 15, 16.

[3] *Ib.* I. vi. 10.

[4] *Ib.* IV. viii. 6; *Apol.* 5, 7.

[5] *Ib.* IV. iii. 13. Dakyns' note gives "co-ordinator and container of the universe," iii., pt. i. 151. The passage accepts a distinction between the Supreme Ruler and inferior deities; but see Gilbert's note in his Edn. Xen., *Comm. Præf. Crit.* p. lxiii.

suffice to secure credit for them, although he jestingly says that if Euthyphron accepts them, he supposes that he must needs give way.[1] This is a feature not brought forward by Xenophon, but seen plainly in the Socratic dialogues of Plato. He believes God to be unchangeably good, and stories inconsistent with this are ugly lies. Yet he seems to accept lower divinities who minister to men of their bounty, and who, like the Supreme Ruler, are seen only in their working.[2] And perhaps the difficulty of uniting this idea with the unity of the Supreme Being is one for us rather than for Socrates. His thought is not so strictly personalised. The Supreme Reason manifests himself in the world, and particularly in men, and may be conceived as dwelling also in beings wiser and more powerful than men. And still it is not mere impersonal diffusion. There is a central Divine Life in whom all things "lovely and of good report" live, who upholds all things, and by whom all things subsist.[3] In all this, if there was an attitude of conformity in some measure to established belief, the personal judgment was preserved intact; the interpretation was subjective, and belief in God was sustained by rational reasons; a process which made Socrates a dangerous friend to orthodox Greek religion.

His reasoning on the being of God, his relations to men, and the maintenance of these relations in conscious activity through human service, all proceeded

[1] Plato, *Euthyphron*, 6 A, B; cf. *Repub.* ii. 377 E *sq.*, 408 C, *Symp.* 195 C.

[2] Xen., *Mem.* IV. iii. 13; cf. Plato, *Apol.* 26 C *sq.* This passage seems to have in it a casuistical element. *Phædo*, 63 C; *Euthyphron*, 14 E, 15.

[3] Xen., *ib.*

on a practical ignoring of tradition and authority. Through whatever puerilities of illustration or imperfectly welded links of reasoning, the rational character of the process was maintained. He is the father of the Design Argument, that proceeds from order in the world and in the physical and mental organism of man to a Supernal Reason. It has been obscured of late, but a form of reasoning that appealed to minds for two thousand years, from Socrates to Mill, possesses some claim to consideration. In his view the whole world of things, "enormous in size, infinite in number," owes its existence and plan to mind.[1] And the order read there is no less easy to discern in the make of man. His body is a system of contrivances, bespeaking utility and delight as ends.[2] Sight, smell, the protective arrangements of the organs, their relative positions in the body, the maternal instinct, and articulate speech, are among the evidences adduced. Some of his illustrations are sufficiently trivial, but the principle of finality is consistently followed. And, coming to mind, its very presence in man furnishes, in the view of Socrates, proof of the presence of God in the universe. For as the body contains "a tiny fragment" of the elements, so mind is, in his view, a spark of the wisdom[3] that is immanent in the universe. This mind specialises into a capability of communion with the divine in worship and service.[4] It looks "before and after"; it takes precautions to supply man's need; it can learn and "garner in the storehouse of memory all that man has heard or seen

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. 4. 8; cf. IV. iii.
[2] *Ib.* I. iv. 5–7, 11, 12; IV. iii. 11.
[3] *Ib.* I. iv. 8.
[4] *Ib.* I. iv. 13; cf. IV. iii. 12.

or understood."[1] Man's organs, in a word, mental and bodily, carry within themselves a reason of their being; but the securing of the end of the right performance of the function of each is itself an instrument towards the higher end of the preservation and perpetuation of life which, ministered to by natural beings and agencies, each of which is also an end and an instrument, finds its purpose realised in the service of virtue, the doing of the will of God.

That examination of the world which revealed what seemed to him evidences of purpose in its framing, and caused him to regard it as the "handiwork of some wise artificer," made its economy wear the aspect of providence towards men. He found a continuous adjustment of relations between man and his circumstances. To him the powers of nature appeared not only to fulfil admirably the function proclaimed in their make and constitution, but those ends became admirable means to serve and delight mankind, and to enable it to attain the ends of its existence. He finds a general providence in light and food, water and fire, the adaptation of the seasons to earth's fruitfulness and man's health, the subservience of the animals to man's use, and the way in which to the action of reason each thing parts with its secret of blessing.[2] And the special exigencies of life in which human foresight would fail, the gods meet by their responses to the inquiries of their worshippers.

The evolutionary conception that, in connection with the idea of the immanence of God, rules modern thinking on these subjects, makes minds to-day sensitive to the triviality mingled with all this reasoning. The

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. iv. 13. [2] *Ib.* IV. iii. 3–12.

examples cited by Socrates are, in some instances, almost worthy to be compared with Bernardin de Saint Pierre's theory as to the melon, which is quoted by M. Janet.[1] It was "that the melon has been divided into sections by nature for family eating; the pumpkin, being larger, can be eaten with one's neighbours." These things represent the *reductio ad absurdum* of the doctrine of extrinsic final causes. The doctrine of intrinsic final cause, the purpose revealed in fitness for function, remained untouched by the dispersal of such puerilities. But a mode of thought, already obsolete, appeared in the flush of the evolutionary advance, which was hostile even to the recognition of design as shown in arrangement and fitness within organs themselves. It was contended (*e.g.*) that the eye was not made for seeing on an intelligent plan from the outset, but by a system of trial and experiment in which Nature was unconsciously working her way to an end never intelligently conceived and often only imperfectly attained; an objection gaining its principal force from a lingering conception of power working upon an undivine and essentially separate universe from the outside. This theory of blind achievement meeting the contention of the design argument with a denial of its main assumption, which is that order implies intelligence, has itself given way to a new and more fruitful view of the question. Emphasis on the specific operation of design, *e.g.* in particular organs, has yielded to a conception of a world evolving, through the immanence of Deity, a purpose latent from the first. Evolution is the name given to the process by which the purpose

[1] *Final Causes*, p. 191.

becomes explicit. The method of the Divine operation is differently conceived, with the gain of explaining what on the old theory was mere mystery, and moralising a process conceived before as purely natural or rather non-moral.

The doctrine of man held by Socrates was that he constituted the centre of this world as a system of ends. He is a sharer of the Divine nature.[1] Through his essential nature, which is conceived by Socrates as intelligence enshrined in a body which can execute the behests of mind, he moves amongst the other creatures as a god.[2] Without reason, increase or adaptability of the members of the body is useless; and without suitable bodily organs the case is not much better. But with superiority in mind and members, continuous supremacy is assured.

Worship, Socrates regarded as an expression of the close relations between man and God, and a method of maintaining them in their integrity, when it was the Godward attitude of a righteous life. No man could be less of a slave to form or more alive to the danger of substituting some positive ordinance or ceremonial of religion for goodness. He believed in sacrificing according to his means. Acceptability was not a question of quantity in the gift, but of character in the giver.[3] Unto men first and then unto their offerings the gods had respect. He believed in prayer for good in general, leaving God to decide what

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. iv. 8. The question is as to the being of God, but the implication is that mind is a spark of the universal reason, as the body is a fragment of the matter of the world.

[2] *Ib.* I. iv. 14; cf. Plato, *Repub.* vi. 501 B; *Phædrus*, 248 A.

[3] Xen., *Mem.* I. iii. 3; IV. iii. 16, 17.

particular good should be for him. "His formula of prayer was simple: 'Give me that which is best for me'; for, said he, the gods know best what good things are,—to pray for gold or silver or despotic power were no better than to make some particular throw at dice or stake in battle or any such thing the subject of prayer, of which the future consequences are manifestly uncertain."[1] It is hardly safe to quote the *Phædrus* for the doctrines of Socrates; yet the prayer at the close accords with the spirit of his devotions as described by Xenophon: "Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who here abide, grant me to be beautiful in the inner man, and all I have of outer things to be at peace with those within. May I count the wise man only rich. And may my store of gold be such as none but the good can bear."[2] The service of God was living righteously; without this neither prayers nor gifts were of any avail. A man's life-work was a religious offering.[3] Allowing for the Hellenic cast of thought, the emphasis on the intellectual and æsthetic aspect of conduct, religion is a service of the heart, expressing itself in a life devoted to righteousness, akin to that which in Hebraism appears as the continual prophetic demand.

Closely connected with worship is the subject of the "divine sign," which Socrates claimed as, in effect, a personal oracle. As to the consultation of oracles, in its ordinary form the instances brought before us relate rather to the action of others;[4] for Socrates himself, while advising his friends in important crises[5]

[1] Xen., *Mem.* I. iii. 2; cf. Plato, *Phædo*, 117 C.
[2] Wright. [3] *Apol.* 23 B, C. [4] *Apol.* 21 A.
[5] Xen., *Anab.* III. i. 4–7; *Mem.* I. i. 6–9.

to adopt that method of learning the Divine will, his personal sign was apparently found a sufficient guide. This "divine something" (*τὸ δαιμόνιον*) seemed to take the form of a warning inner voice which was with him through life,[1] restraining him from mistaken action, sometimes in small matters[2] and sometimes in such great matters as his abstinence from politics, his philosophic associations, and his trusting to an extempore defence.[3] In the *Apology* he describes it as always a restraint, never a stimulus. And here there is a conflict of testimony; for Xenophon says, on the contrary, "that he would constantly advise his associates to do this or beware of doing that upon the authority of this same divine voice."[4] This, however, is not of much moment, for it means this—the absence of warning or check implied permission.

A more important question is that concerning the nature of this sign. One line of interpretation is suggested by the name given to the warning voice and the part it played in the life of Socrates. There is no question whatever that he himself regarded it as Heaven sent. It is a "divine something," a "divine sign," "the prophetic sign which he is wont to receive from the divine voice"; and while it speaks with reference to great and small things, it serves in his life very much the purpose which oracular signs serve in other men's. Just as to his companions he counselled action in all ordinary things by the use of their own reason and judgment, and consultation of

[1] See Zeller's collection of passages, *Socr.* p. 86, note.
[2] *Euthyd.* 272 E; *Phædrus*, 242 B.
[3] *Apol.* 31 D; *Theæt.* 151 A; Xen., *Mem.* IV. viii. 5.
[4] *Ib.* I. i. 4; cf. IV. iii. 12; IV. viii. 1.

oracles where these failed; so his own normal action was regulated by his clear sense of right, virtue constituting for him the only true happiness; but when in this line of conduct not only alternative courses of action, where questions of conscience were concerned, arose, but also cases where there were several possible courses, and the choice was one between acts, apparently, of moral indifference, or, at anyrate, not one between plain right and wrong, then this manifestation, in which he recognised the voice of God, became his guide. It is true that he represents it as not confining its guidance to grave affairs, yet this is merely a distinction of degree in weight; it can be shown that none of the recorded occasions of this restraint operating can from the Socratic standpoint be called absolutely trivial; the most unimportant might have grave issues. Its work was to deter from ill. And this could not be trifling, he believed it divine; just as he believed the mind of God wrought in the human mind through our participation in the World-Reason, so through the avenue of this sensitiveness to the tone and quality of acts, carrying with it a kind of prophetic power, this sign was wrought, and became for him an instrument of connection with the Divine Will and obedience to that Will. Life was a unity with Socrates, and it was not a more remote supposition to have contact with God on its practical than on its intellectual side. The difference is that while he regards mind as a spark of the Divine Wisdom, he does not think of its ordinary operation as he thinks of the activity of the sign. He seeks God's activity here in the abnormal.

To explain this sign has been a very great difficulty to the philosophic critics of Greek thought. Zeller says in a note:[1] "Doubtless Socrates regarded God or the deity as its ultimate source. But he expresses no opinion as to whether it came herefrom." This latter is an extraordinary statement. The name given to the manifestation is itself a sufficient proof of his belief; but in closest connection with sentences in which this name (the Daimonion), signifying a divine something, is used, he speaks of it as expressing the mind of God. Of his defence he says: "I assure you, Hermogenes, that each time I have essayed to give my thoughts to the defence which I am to make before the Court, 'the divinity (τὸ δαιμόνιον) has opposed me.' And when he (Hermogenes) exclaimed, 'How strange!' 'Do you find it strange' (he continued) 'that to the Godhead (τῷ θεῷ) it should appear better for me to close my life at once?'"[2] He expresses here the opinion that the voice or sense of restraint expressed the divine will in the matter; and that this was his unshaken conviction there is no reasonable doubt. Every possible explanation has been advanced to meet the case. In patristic writing it was thought the manifestations were those of a personal genius, demon or angel. By critics seeking a more mundane theory of the facts, it has been treated as the effect of melancholia or some other form of insanity. This theory, through the influence perhaps of the school of Lombroso, has undergone revival lately. Lombroso, dealing with the abnormalities of genius, says of Socrates that he had "a cretin-like physiognomy,"

[1] Zeller, *Soc.* p. 85, note 5.

[2] Xen., *Mem.* IV. viii. 5, 6; cf. I. iv. 15; IV. iii. 12.

that he "presented a photoparasthesia which enabled him to gaze at the sun for a considerable time without experiencing any discomfort,"[1] that he "often danced and jumped in the street without reason"; but the uncritical heaping together of illustrations, of which Lombroso's book is full,[2] does not prepossess the mind in favour of the theory. In this case, of two statements out of three, one is much too unqualified, and one is unreliable; and on another page he denies one of the best attested of facts, *i.e.* that Socrates was remarkable for his abstinence.[3] At present the theory has some ascendency. It is used, as Professor James shows, to discredit literature which the critic dislikes,[4] or religious manifestations not explicable in any orthodox philosophic fashion. Fouillée talks about a psychological hallucination. Dr. Jackson thinks it was an illusion associated with the sense of hearing. Piat admits a possible element of truth in the former. In a newspaper report[5] of a medical lecture delivered by Professor Balfour in connection with the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, it is said, "Professor Balfour alluded to the hallucinations of Socrates." Dr. Murray calls it an "auditory hallucination."[6] The age is one of swift change, and already such a theory as Lombroso's, in its application to natures like that of Socrates', seems a little old-fashioned. If there is one thing prominent in Socrates it is reason. He might be accused of being prosaic, of showing little sympathy with any but the

[1] *The Man of Genius*, pp. 8, 33, 38.
[2] *Ib.* pp. 45, 63, etc.
[3] *Ib.* p. 54.
[4] James, *Varieties of Religion*, pp. 16–18.
[5] Dec. 4, 1900.
[6] *Anc. Gk. Lit.* p. 173.

rational side of things, but he is eminently sane. The note of his life is an appeal to reason. The true criticism on such a theory advanced as an explanation of the "divinum quiddam" in Socrates' experience is that this theory isolates it; whereas it is characteristic. To call it hallucination,[1] whether physiological or psychological, explains nothing, and could only be supposed to do so in cases where religious experiences are regarded as fruits of mental disease. A theory which regards the "voice" as the objectifying of a process of thought confesses failure.[2]

It is not necessary to limit the sphere of the operation of the "sign" to the conscience to see that some of the objections to this theory are not profound. It is valid to urge[3] that if conscience approves or disapproves in retrospect of an act, it also urges and forbids; whereas the δαιμόνιον prohibited merely, although even here it is necessary to say that its prohibitions became, sometimes at anyrate, a cause of detecting faults in past conduct.[4] It is not conclusive to say that conscience regards the moral value of acts and the "sign" their consequences, for in Socrates' way of looking at life there was a close connection between the two things. He believed that virtue led to happiness, and sought to defend his doctrine, when his virtue had led to his death, by proving that death was the best thing that could have happened to him. Nor is the objection much more successful which deals with the matters on which the "sign" was active. It is more

[1] Dr. Jackson, *Ency. Brit.* vol. xxii. p. 234.
[2] Cf. Fouillée, ii. p. 284 *sq.*
[3] Zeller, p. 91; Piat, p. 219; see Benn, *Greek Phil.* i. 160, 161.
[4] *Phædr.* 242.

than a question of congruity with the teacher's thought and dignity of character even that is involved in, for example, his defence before the Court; for him it is obeying in the crisis of his life a message from the God to whom his whole career has been dedicated. Nor can the moral sense be excluded in the question of discipleship. And the objection to its being conscience because of the jests of Antisthenes is without value. It is not proved that there was any real levity in the only free allusion by Socrates himself.[1] He might well enough feel that the spirit of love, alluded to under the old mythological forms, might be offended against by light words. There is nothing in all this to invalidate the remarks of Brandis,[2] save in their too rigid limitation. The sign is not conscience merely, nor is the field of its operations confined to questions of plain right and wrong. The point of judgment of the whole matter is just the transfer of final authority from without to within; in Hegel's words,[3] "Socrates—in assigning to insight, to conviction, the determination of men's actions—posited the Individual as capable of a final moral decision in contraposition to Country and to Customary Morality, *and thus made himself an Oracle in the Greek sense.*" This is in agreement essentially with Brandis' view: "But it is easily conceivable that Socrates sought Divine revelations first of all in self-consciousness, in order to knit them more closely to moral determinations."[4]

[1] *Phædr.* 242.
[2] *Handbuch der Geschichte der Gr. Rom. Phil.* II. i. pp. 60–63.
[3] *Phil. of Hist.* p. 281 (Eng. trans.).
[4] Brandis, *l.c.*

The defect of Socrates' own explanation is that it is not generalised. He fastens on the experience as peculiar to himself,[1] and only on those instances of decisions in which he feels unable to explain the grounds of his apparently instinctive action. It attached itself to the religious sense so as always to command the obedience of his devout mind. Its suddenness and the authoritative character it wore led him to attribute it to an exceptional divine intervention. He was not in a position to analyse scientifically the contents of his own consciousness. He had a nature quickly responsive to moral claims, sensitive (in view of his age) to moral atmospheres, and its action is more truly described as intuitive than judicial. Here, indeed, it is necessary to recall his absolute language about the victory of true science over desire: his own obedience to duty was so prompt and had become so habitual that the sense of conflict was scarcely present; so here the mind's processes were obscure to him; and the imperative restraint, the fruit of workings, as to-day would be said, in that larger life of the soul lying outside the immediate consciousness, was attributed by him to God. The mistake was to limit his theory to the special experiences, however numerous. To compare the phenomena with the Christian doctrine of the interpenetration of the human spirit by the "spirit of holiness": all mental life is a participation in the reason of God; it is divine inspiration that giveth us understanding: all spiritual life is a drinking of one spirit, which dwells in men, working in reason, conscience, and affections, and every right activity of

[1] *Repub.* 496 C.

the many-sided single self. There are intensified experiences which the records of religious life in all times record. But the recognition that at such a time in a religious man's experience the "Spirit suffered him not" to take such and such a course, or constrained him to take another, is not to be interpreted as limiting fellowship with the life of God to such moments. Instead of saying simply that the "sign" was a message from the divinity, if Socrates had generalised his explanation he would have said that all legitimate exercises of his inner life were no less and no more "wrought in God" than his obedience to the restraints of the Daimonion. The mistake was to identify inexplicability with divinity. To-day men are convinced that if God is only to be discovered in the exceptional experience, He will not be found at all. The divine influence was not less active with Socrates when in the *Apologia* he asserted his resolution to obey God rather than the State, or when in the *Crito* he describes himself as listening to the Laws rather than to his friend, than when he yielded to its restraint and prepared no set defence. In the one case he felt the influence to be divine, in the other it seemed to be purely the action of his own mind. To have followed up the suggestion of the conversation with Aristodemus would have furnished him with a theory consistent and comprehensive. Just as the purged and disciplined human reason could attain true knowledge because it participated in the one reason in the world, so when it turned towards the practical life it became through its spiritual apprehensiveness the pliant organ of the one righteousness to which its nature was akin. If a spark of the Divine Wisdom could

shine through the intellectual life, so a voice of guidance from the Divine Goodness could speak in the practical life.

It has been argued[1] that "it was a quick exercise of a judgment informed by knowledge of the subject, trained by experience, and inferring from cause to effect without consciousness of the process." It is admitted that statements in Plato are inconsistent with this theory; the description of the "sign" as vouchsafed to Socrates from childhood, as restraining him from returning across the Ilissus after his speech to Phædrus, until his levity is atoned for by a new discourse, or leaving the palæstra as he intended when Euthydemus entered, and causing him to listen, in consequence, to an eristic exhibition. It is admitted that if these statements are historical the theory is overthrown; and it is asserted that the "heterogeneous instances of warnings given by it" are certainly inventions, part of the machinery of "the dialogues in which they stand." But supposing this is so, they are inventions in character; possibly no more inventions than other "heterogeneous instances" which are part of the sum-total through which our impression of the experience as a whole is formed. We are not at liberty, *e.g.*, to use the statements Xenophon furnishes to assist us in forming a theory, and then to use the theory so formed to reject incidents from sources which may have an equal claim to contribute to the total impression, unless we have established, as against Plato, the absolute historicity of Xenophon.

The following admirable words seem to indicate the true track:

[1] *Apology*, Riddell's edition, Appendix A, p. 106.

"No Christian would be startled by a view which recognised every part of his mental processes as performed in dependence on God; nor, on the other hand, would he be shocked to hear them spoken of as independently and properly his own. So long as each view reached the whole way, he would be satisfied with it, and would comprehend it. What Socrates did was to halve each of these views, and to speak of his mental processes as human up to the point where he could still follow them,—beyond that, as divine!"[1] What Socrates did was to rationalise the known, and to make the mysterious the divine. What the usual explanations do is to complete the rationalising process by extending it to what was to him the voice or sign of the divinity. These theories cannot explain how his own intuitions or presentiments or momentary reasonings that acted like instinct could yet so appeal to his absolute reverence and obedience, and wear a character so remarkable. They did not do so by a process of mistake or illusion, but because at these points in experience there was an intensifying of the union which was ordinarily unmarked, a rising into consciousness of feelings simultaneously with premonitions or forecasts which like "every part of his mental processes" depended on God, and whose dependence was made strikingly obvious at the time. The experience remains not without mysteries and limitations. Its negative character has been noted as one; but this is not contradictory of confirmations which, "coinciding with an existing purpose,"[2] would be less noticeable. The strange supposition that he himself was the only recipient of such warnings seems

[1] *Apol.* p. 109. [2] *Ib.* p. 108.

to be another, although there seems[1] to be an obscure hint to Euthydemus that others might receive them. It limits in such amazing fashion his notion of the deity's operations. Yet when all this is considered, it would require one to disbelieve the great challenge, "Is He not the God of the Gentiles also?" or to rest in that parochial philosophy which turns away from experiences essentially religious as not only intractable but repellent, not to see in this manifestation an attenuated but real indication of the contact of the human spirit with the spirit of Him who besets us behind and before.

We know that out of the Hebrew experience of religion the thought of the connection between God and the soul as enduring beyond time and change grew; this, at least, was a vision from the heights of the religious life. Can it be affirmed that the Greek teacher, by the pathway of reason or through any experiences in the region of the emotional and moral life, gained such a view-point? Broadly, the answer is that he did not profess knowledge on the question of immortality, but he cherished the belief. Whenever this subject is touched, it is impossible to exclude from the mind the marvellous picture in the *Phædo*; but the question always presents itself, how much actual information is to be gained from this and other dialogues, where the subject is dealt with in connection with matter known to be Platonic rather than Socratic. None but can feel here the harmony of speech and scene, the verisimilitude of spirit and atmosphere; yet doubts recur. Coming after a somewhat rigid reading of the dialogues, and a tendency to limit everything by

[1] *Mem.* IV. iii. 13, quoted, *ib.* 103, with this interpretation put upon it.

productions really composed in an apologetic interest, the feeling to-day is rather to enhance the degree of Socratic influence in Plato. Mere artistic truth could scarcely have permitted the teachings of the *Meno*, the *Phædo*, and the *Republic* being put into the mouth of Socrates, if his attitude to the subject can be fairly inferred from the silence of the *Memorabilia*. If elsewhere in Xenophon there are points of contact with the teachings of the dialogues, it remains still somewhat of a mystery why, with all his anxiety to show the religious faith of Socrates, he should have so completely ignored or eliminated this element from his formal presentation of his master only to preserve it in the closing pages of a historical romance.[1] The reasonings in the *Phædo*[2] are metaphysical and idealistic. They will serve to show us the Platonised Socrates. The immortality of the soul is supported by various considerations: by the idea of the generation of opposite conditions from their opposites;[3] by the doctrine of pre-existence proved through recollection;[4] by the uncompounded character of the soul;[5] by her supremacy over the body, which shows her closer relationship to the divine;[6] by her presumptive indestructibility as compared with the body, which itself is not immediately dissolved.[7] Philosophy, which is the love of wisdom and the practice of death, can unite the soul to the life of the gods. At this point Simmias and Cebes start objections: Simmias compares soul and body to the harmony of

[1] *Cyropædia*, VIII. vii. 17–22.

[2] See for this whole analysis, Campbell, art. "Plato," *Ency. Brit.*, Jowett, and Church.

[3] *Phædo*, 70 E *sq.*

[4] *Ib.* 72 E *sq.*

[5] *Ib.* 78 B *sq.*

[6] *Ib.* 80 A.

[7] *Ib.* 80 B *sq.*

a lyre and the lyre itself, and suggests that the incorporeal character of the soul does not permit its immortality to be inferred; and Cebes argues that the fact of the soul's having survived many changes does not prove its survival of the change death brings, any more than the fact of a man's wearing out successive garments proves that he is not himself worn out at last. The first of these objections Socrates answers by falling back on the doctrine of pre-existence, which was admitted: if the soul existed before the body, it cannot be the harmony of the body; "a harmony[1] cannot lead the elements of which it is composed, it must follow them"; a harmony is a harmony "according as it is adjusted," but a soul is not, in any case, less or more a soul; harmony is inapplicable to souls because of their moral condition: "Is not one soul said to have intelligence and virtue, and to be good; while another is said to have folly and vice, and to be bad?"[2] Then, "does the soul yield to the passions of the body, or does she oppose them?"[3] But a harmony is simply the necessary effect of "the tensions and relaxations and vibrations"[4] of the elements of which it is composed. It cannot oppose its instrument. Thus "it is quite wrong to say that the soul is a harmony."[5] And as for the objection of Cebes, it "raises the whole subject of the causes of generation and decay."[6] For himself, Socrates has abandoned all attempts to satisfy himself as to the reasons of things along lines of mechanical and physical causation, which after all describe methods only, confuse condition with cause, and never get back to the real cause—mind. He has concluded that he

[1] *Phædo* 93 A (Church). [2] *Ib.* 93 B. [3] *Ib.* 94 B.
[4] *Ib.* 94 C. [5] *Ib.* 94 E. [6] *Ib.* 95 E.

"must have recourse to conceptions, and examine the truth of existence by means of them."[1] Thus he was led to the assumption of the existence of an absolute beauty and an absolute good,[2] of which the conceptions in the minds of men are imperfect images;[3] and which, as in the case with other ideas such as greatness, are the causes of such beauty and goodness as are seen amongst men. They are real subsistences in which objects participate. And the connection between the ideas and the things which participate in them, or in which they inhere, is such that it cannot cease without the thing losing its essential nature. Cold is different from snow, and fire from heat; but the connection is such that snow cannot "receive heat; and yet remain what it was, snow and hot"; nor fire "receive the cold, and still remain what it was, fire and cold." The ideas exclude each other. Now it is so with the soul and life.[4] As oddness is the idea of three, coldness of snow, heat of fire, so the immortal is the idea of the soul, and it cannot admit its opposite, death. The immortal is imperishable. "If the immortal is imperishable, the soul cannot perish when death comes upon her."[5] After this the discourse of Socrates passes into a mythological description of the soul's experiences and surroundings after death, involving a description of what this earth, which men only know in part, is, the judgment of the evil and the reward of the good.

It is doing cruel injustice to the inexpressible beauty of the *Phædo* to crowd together in this fashion its metaphysical reasonings; doing so we seem to pass from serenity to jangling. Few have read this dialogue but

[1] *Phædo*, 99 E. [2] *Ib.* 100 B. [3] Cf. Church, p. 181, note.
[4] *Ib.* 105 C, D, E. [5] *Ib.* 106 B.

have felt that Phædo's own words described their case: "Well, I myself was strangely moved on that day. I did not feel that I was being present at the death of a dear friend. I did not pity him, for he seemed to me happy . . . both in his bearing and in his words, so fearlessly and nobly did he die. . . . A very singular feeling came over me, a strange mixture of pleasure and of pain, when I remembered that he was presently to die." Yet we have to seek to gather what, if anything, is truly Socratic in all the reasoning here attributed to him, and what its worth is; though this latter question is of less immediate concern. It would be strange if the lapse of two thousand years left the form of reasoning on such a theme untouched. And to take the less important task first. Many of the arguments possess little cogency for us. They depend on the acceptance as a whole of the Platonic System, with its conceptions of Reminiscence, Persistence, Ideas, Transmigration and all. Succession is not the same as effect, nor pre-existence as survival. Modern psychology does not set forth theories as to the uncompounded character of the soul; the supremacy of soul is not more a fact than its dependence on the body to execute its will; it can be injured and helped through the body. The argument from the more lasting character of the soul resting on the continuance of identity through the changes of this life assumes the point to be proved as to death. That as to the impossibility of an idea admitting its opposite is little more than verbalism. It starts by saying what we wish to see proved, that the soul participates in the immortal; of course, if this is so there is no need of further discussion. But the form of all these reasonings is determined by the whole

Platonic conception of the soul in the background, and the early admission of pre-existence. If the soul is—what underlies all the considerations—a participant in the self-existent idea, then, of course, it had pre-existence, and it cannot die. The main points[1] in which the argumentation of the *Phædo* touches modern thinking on the subject, which rather turns to moral and religious considerations than to so-called natural arguments, that are, after all, only imperfect analogies, are in the description of the soul's discipline of itself: its study is preparation for death (which comes close to the qualitative view of eternal life); and the picture of the moral issues of our earthly career.

When we pass from the metaphysical and idealistic argumentation of the *Phædo*, most of which cannot be conceived to be Socratic, and return to the ground of dialogues specially preserving his teaching, we find hardly an utterance[2] on the subject, and Xenophon is silent about it in the *Memorabilia*. In the *Apology* the tone of Socrates is hesitating and doubtful. Death is either annihilation, to be compared to dreamless sleep ("Eternity is nothing more than a single night"), or it is a migration of the soul to the dwelling-place of those who have died and yet live, where are the true judges, and "the other demi-gods who were just in their lives," with whom it "would be an infinite happiness to converse," and who are happier than men on earth, for "they are immortal," at least if the common belief is true. In any case, "no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death." He closes with the famous and oft-quoted words: "But now the time has come, and we must go hence; I to die, and you to live.

[1] Cf. Jowett, ii. p. 187.

[2] *Meno*, 81 *sq.*, *e.g.*, is Platonic.

Whether life or death is better is known to God, and to God only."[1] Death in the *Crito*, in the language put into the mouth of the Laws, is a "journey to Hades," where offenders against the Laws are not received kindly by their brethren the Laws in the underworld.[2] These allusions are quite different from the statements in the "Socratic-Platonic" dialogues, where the doctrine, stated with contrasted fulness and confidence, is implicated with the doctrine of Recollection, or given in mythical coverings. But it cannot be denied that this reticence and hesitancy is much more in keeping with the idea of the plain moralist of Xenophon. In the romance of the *Cyropædia*, however, there are utterances approximating much more closely to the tone of confident belief, which may be taken as Xenophon's reproduction and application of Socratic teaching.[3] The dying Cyrus[4] urges that a negative argument against immortality cannot be established from the invisibility of the soul, which was equally invisible when it occupied his body; that remorse is the result of the action of the murdered upon their murderers; that the soul was that which kept the body alive, the body depending on it, not it on the body; that the apprehensive and forecasting power of the soul in sleep, when it is most free from the dominion of the body, rather points to the increase of its intelligent activity when wholly separate from the body. In any case, he feels his death to be an occasion for rejoicing,[5] as he will be safe from harm whether annihilated or living with God. The things dwelt on here are such as are not inconsistent with teachings in the *Memora-*

[1] *Apol.* 40 C, 41 (Church). [2] *Crito*, 54 A, C. [3] Jowett, ii. 191.
[4] *Cyrop.* VIII. vii. 17–22. [5] *Ib.* 27.

*bilia* where no such inferences are drawn from them. There the invisibility of the soul is used to deprecate unbelief as to the invisible Divinity; there, too, the soul is the directing principle of the body; and in the *Apologia* we have words as to the good man's hope to which the words of Cyrus seem akin. There, too, the basis of, at least, a pantheistic doctrine of the inextinguishable character of the soul is given;[1] an emanation of the Reason whose signs are universal cannot die. There are, too, as M. Piat, to whom this comparison is due, points out, in this passage points of contact with the fully developed doctrine. The soul is that which vivifies perishable bodies, and in the *Phædo* it is inseparably united with the principle of life.[2] Its spirituality and intelligence seem to have freer scope when, as in sleep, its connection with the body appears slightest. Death is like sleep. And it is then that the soul may be expected to evince most clearly its nature. This, too, appears to contain a suggestion of that "study" in the *Phædo* which "is simply the release and separation of the soul from the body."[3] In the other world and nowhere else will one "meet with wisdom in its purity."

It may unquestionably be concluded that Socrates held faith in immortality, but as compared with the *Phædo* the scantiness of the allusions in the historical matter bespeaks his own sense of the absence of that reasoned basis for assertion which he so earnestly sought in his discussions. Yet, on the other hand, the large place the doctrine holds in Platonism and in dialogues, that, in the midst of other matter, still yield

[1] *Mem.* I. iv. 8.
[2] *Socrate*, pp. 230–233, and *Phædo*, 106.
[3] Cf. 65–67.

some of the actual Socrates, is entirely in favour of regarding Plato's speculations as testimony to a doctrine of immortality in the teaching of Socrates to which his disciple gave a development so ample and so strongly characteristic that the relationship between them has ceased to be plain.

Forms of thought vary, and reasoning that seems weighty to one age ceases to carry conviction to a time with severer notions of proof; and this applies no less to the two or three considerations apparently Socratic in origin than to the reasonings in the *Phædo* already dealt with. The doctrine which constitutes the soul, the living principle of its organism, belongs to a non-experimental way of handling the problem, and seems to assume the point at issue. Nor is it a convincing argument that is deduced from the spirituality of the soul manifesting itself in greater vigour in proportion as it is freed from association with the body. In the one case it is known from ordinary experience that the mind works in sleep, in the other case it is not known in the same way from ordinary experience that it exists at all, much less works with greater freedom. If it is shown, first, that it continues to exist after death, its greater freedom may be probable, but the point to be proved is its immortality, not its increased freedom, granted its immortality. Experience (comprising all that is included in the Christian as in other historical religions) alone could establish what was desired. Some slight hints and suggestions of another line of thought are contained in the passages already quoted from the *Apology* and the *Crito*, the idea of the future as a field for the realisation of the moral issues of life here. But this is not

followed up. Socrates' tendency is always to the automatic action of moral law.[1] He tends ordinarily to treat this life as complete in itself, even in the face of facts apparently inconsistent with his theory. In his view the inconsistency is not real.

The sum of testimony on the subject is restricted. The arguments are less arguments than hints and gleams of truth, not always strictly relevant to the point to be proved, but interesting in themselves, and touching suggestively some of the many aspects of the subject. The remarkable thing is not the failure to reach dogmatic certainty (unattainable before Christ), but the reverence for truth that, in the absence of completely satisfying evidence of that which he earnestly desired to have confirmed, refused the lower satisfactions of mere unsifted tradition and superstition; and the elevation of soul which clung to duty to the last, and faced the dimness of death with cheerful courage.

[1] *Mem.* III. ix. 12; IV. iv. 19 *sq.*

# CHAPTER IX

## THE PERSONAL ISSUES. ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCRATIC TEACHING OF ATHENIAN PEOPLE. ELEMENTS AND CHARACTER OF OPPOSITION. TRIAL AND DEATH

It was after the death of Socrates that Plato wrote the words which he puts into the mouth of Anytus in the *Meno*:[1] "Socrates, I think that you are too ready to speak evil of men; and, if you will take my advice, I would recommend you to be careful. Perhaps there is no city in which it is not easier to do men harm than to do them good, and this is certainly the case at Athens, as I believe that you know." The "evil-speaking" attributed to Socrates is a criticism of the great men who have been unable to impart their capacity and worth to their sons, in his argument to show that there are no teachers of virtue. Anytus is angry even at the ironical suggestion of sending anyone to the Sophists to learn virtue, and at the free handling of great names. And he goes away using ominous words. Whether the real Anytus ever used such words or not we cannot know; but it is certain that at the time to which, in Plato's invention, they are assigned, they were true, and not at that time only. There was something in the constitution of the Athenian State and

[1] 94 E.

the atmosphere of Athenian life favourable to freedom within limits; but there was also that which was inimical to a too free interpretation of that freedom. The normal habit of government by discussion did promote, within a certain range, the habit in the people of examining arguments and forming judgments for themselves. Nevertheless such freedom did not reach the ideal state of things pictured by Grote.[1] His account rests on the idealised sketch in the Funeral Oration of Pericles, which gives the Athens of the statesman's dream. Such liberty as existed was not extended to matters deemed to affect religion, and bigotry was able to flourish in great strength. There were, moreover, in the beginning of the fourth century B.C. special causes at work intensifying the danger run by free speculation. It was in 399 B.C. (April) that these general and special tendencies of opposition to the teaching of Socrates culminated in his trial and death. An indictment was brought against him by Meletus, a tragic poet; Lycon, an unknown rhetorician; and Anytus, a democratic leader. It ran thus: "Socrates is guilty of crime—first, in not believing in the gods that the city believes in; secondly, in introducing other new gods; thirdly, in corrupting the youth. The penalty due is death."

How precisely Socrates himself dealt with these charges we do not know.[2] His disciples Xenophon and Plato deal with them elaborately, each in his peculiar fashion. The whole of the *Memorabilia* constitutes

[1] *Hist. Gr.* v. 71–73; cf. vii. 142. For a contrary view to Grote, cf. Benn, *Greek Philosophers*, i. 167, 168; Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, pp. 276 *et seq.*; E. Abbott, *Pericles*, pp. 193, 196.

[2] Riddell, *Apol. Plato*, Introd. p. xviii.

Xenophon's reply. The *Apology*, whose truth is that of spirit,[1] is the special answer Plato puts into the mouth of his master; the rest is in the great memorial built to his fame in the *Dialogues*. Xenophon set himself to deal with specific charges, and his defence grew into a presentation of the good citizen, who was a moralist and the counsellor of all his friends. To him, summarising his points roughly in the opening chapters of the *Memorabilia*, there seems no reason in the charges. No tolerable evidence was forthcoming to show that Socrates failed to comply with the ordinary observances of the State religion. Nor did it appear to him that the claim Socrates made to what was virtually a private oracle could have weighed against him in the common mind, as his accusers hoped; for this very fact is part of the evidence adduced in the *Memorabilia* in favour of his piety. Doubtless it was a fact capable of a double interpretation; but Xenophon could scarcely have been so unwise as to introduce as counter evidence the very thing upon which his accusers relied, if this particular support of the charge had influenced very many. A mixture of political and moral offences constituted the third count.[2] Socrates was a critic of "bean politics."[3] He had been associated with men obnoxious to the State as democratically constituted; his influence was inimical to parental authority and respect for the body of the citizens. When we turn to the *Apology* of Plato the emphasis shifts. It is obvious that the main

[1] Riddell, *op. cit.* p. xix.

[2] Cf. Dr. Jackson's art. "Socrates" in *Ency. Brit.* for analysis of allegations under this head.

[3] Beans were used in the election of public officers at Athens.

effort here is turned in the direction of meeting that drift of prejudice setting in so strongly against the accused in his philosophic character as a supposed physicist and his character of teacher of youth, which is not separated in the popular mind from that of Sophist. Here, too, the defence widens out into a justification of his whole life-work, though confined, disregarding the interruptions caused by the forms of trial, within the limits of a speech. The hostility to be faced was not that of Meletus but of Athens, and the defence takes a corresponding range. It is addressed to Athens and to the world.

It may be at once admitted that in no possible society could a mission such as that of Socrates be carried out without exciting men's hostility. His passion for talk, his pertinacious reasoning, the relentlessness with which, like a "gadfly,"—his own comparison,—he fastened on men, quite unawed by any conventional dignity or authority which the victims might possess, and compelled them to yield up a reason of the aim that was in them, or to discover the barrenness of their minds, all tended to make enemies. Nowhere is the man who persistently says[1] what he thinks people need, rather than what they wish, to hear, likely to escape some of the consequences of unpopularity. And it was an inevitable consequence of the personal and conversational style of teaching adopted by Socrates that it should accentuate the sense of humiliation and irritation of defeated disputants. It is easier to be lectured

[1] *Gorgias*, 521 D *et seq.*, where he discusses the unpopularity sure to befall him. The picture of Demos as petulant and passionate agrees with that painted by Aristophanes, who was at the opposite pole of thought from Socrates. Cf. *Equites*, 40, etc.

as one of a crowd than singled out for treatment in Socratic fashion.[1] It doubtless was a wholesome discipline; it could not but be painful. Nor is it to be supposed that Socrates himself escaped all the defects of his quality of victorious reasoner. There are plenty of passages where the reader, in the calmness of study, experiences a sense sometimes of weariness, sometimes of irritation, at the endless turnings and twistings of the argument; the simplicity, not to say stupidity, of the remarks frequently furnished to the interlocutors for Socratic refutation; the failure sometimes to face the opponents' strongest position; a lingering sense that less than justice has been done to his view. In some dialogues Socrates seems too obviously the "star" of the little company of players. One could not be human, in short, who could carry on the work of a controversialist for many years without sometimes yielding to the besetting sins of the character. Macaulay probably spoke for more than himself when he wrote: "The more I read about him the less I wonder that they poisoned him."[2] It is quite certain, in any case, that his sowing of truth in Athens had raised up for him a plentiful crop of dislike. Men who were self-sufficient and satisfied with existing conditions resented his handling. And of this his own utterances (accepting the drift and spirit of the *Apology* as true) show him to be conscious. He speaks as a man who knows that his main fight is against prejudice.[3]

Another reason of his unpopularity with many is pointed to in the mistaken identification of him at once with the natural philosophers and with the Sophists.[4]

[1] *Laches*, 187 E.
[2] *Life*, ii. 436.
[3] *Apol.* 22 E *sq.*
[4] *Apol.* 18 B, C.

Some twenty-three years before he had been held up to ridicule by Aristophanes, in *The Clouds*, as a mixture of physicist and Sophist, one who kept a "thinking shop," who occupied himself in puerile inquiries and impious speculations, and who taught unsettling principles to the young; and later allusion showed the same misunderstanding. The students of natural philosophy, suspected, as Anaxagoras had been, of irreligion were not Sophists, nor was the converse true; but the common view made no fine distinctions, and the poets' wit had stamped the prevailing impression more deeply on undiscriminating minds. Socrates feels certain that many of his judges in the great court of the Heliæa, consisting probably of five hundred and one members,[1] had grown up with prejudice against him as a man who could teach men to argue on any side, and whose influence on his associates was bad. The identification of him with the natural philosophers, whose pursuits he had abandoned at an early period of his philosophic activity, and now derided, seems merely dense, although quite conceivable in those who confounded physicists with Sophists. There is more reason for mistaking him for a Sophist. He and they alike were public educators; they alike departed from established conventions; they alike appeared to appeal to the individual as against authority. It could hardly perhaps be expected that the average man should clearly distinguish between them. Socrates himself was understood to have been a pupil of Prodicus. His relations with individual Sophists were friendly. Some of his associates had attended their lectures. Often his language and methods seemed indistinguishable from

[1] See Riddell, *op. cit.* p. iv.

theirs.[1] The Athenian conservative felt himself justified in opposition to a dialectician of this kind. If Socrates avowed ignorance, the confession would be confounded with the denial of objective truth. If he insisted on expert knowledge as giving authority to speak on a matter like education, this would be interpreted as teaching youths to disobey their parents. It was corrupting them by undermining their moral principles. It was not grasped that his principle of the attainability of true knowlege by the use of the trained reason separated him from those whose negative criticism started from no such ideal; and that his aim of making this knowledge the basis of all activity must conflict with the theories of those who either reduced reality to the fluctuating experience of the individual, or took "unreasoned commonplace" as material out of which to build schemes of personal advantage.[2] Men did not see these profound differences, but they did see that there were disintegrating influences at work in Athens, sapping conviction and fostering an increasing regardlessness of other considerations than success; and the most obvious of these influences seemed to be the teaching of these Sophists, with whom the ordinary citizen classified the philosopher. They saw that many of those who had received the instruction of these men had been troublers of Athens, and they felt it would be a service to the State to destroy one who to many appeared the worst Sophist of all.

But, admitting all this, it remains true, as has been well remarked, that the foundation reason of the trial was political. After the generation-long strain, as it

[1] *Mem.* IV. iv. 9; *Repub.* 340 D. [2] Riddell, *op. cit.* p. xxv.

seemed, of the Peloponnesian War, ending in the sore humiliation of Athens, there had come to the suffering republic the misery of the oligarchical tyranny of the Thirty; and it was just four years since, through the bravery of Thrasybulus and the sacrifices of many earnest democrats, among whom was Anytus, one of the present accusers, the city had regained its democratic constitution; and the flush of the republican reaction against all aristocrats and oligarchs still continued. The return of the democrats to power had been marked by mildness of treatment of their enemies; but there was a nervous feeling in their minds, analogous perhaps to that with which the French republican watches the ultramontane and royalist section of his countrymen. Men like Anytus saw, or thought they saw, that the theory of government by the instructed man as against the unskilled, rule-of-thumb politicians, which the system of popular election secured for Athens, tended to practical party issues. Filling offices by lot excited the jests of Socrates. He desired intellectual aristocrats. His theory was that political power ought not to belong to the few or the many, as such, but to knowledge. It was a kind of intellectual Whiggism. And the democrats judged that the political affinities of a theory of that kind were with oligarchy.[1] Men who had been in association with him, Critias and Charmides, had gained an evil fame through the crimes of "the Thirty." His disciples appeared to find their political ideals in Sparta; and when it was seen that he was not a mere theorist but so far played the part of practical reformer as to urge some men forward to public life, and that from those who had at

[1] Forchhammer, *Die Athener und Sokrates*, p. 71.

one time been his followers men so harmful to the State as Critias and Charmides came, Anytus and his like would easily persuade themselves that the preservation of the State from such politicians lay in the destruction of their teacher. Nor would the personal animus cherished by Anytus[1] against Socrates prove any the less active that it could avail itself of the disguise of public zeal. And with the wide latitude of Athenian pleading it was possible to present, under the moral and religious headings of the indictment, what would be deemed by many fair illustrations of the type of citizen adherence to Socrates produced.

In his answer,[2] Socrates sums up, first, the floating accusations which at once express and make the prejudice under which he suffers. Outside the court people are saying everywhere: "Socrates is an evil-doer and a curious person, searching into things under the earth and above the heaven, and making the worse appear the better cause, and teaching all this to others."[3] Inside he must meet the charge: "Socrates is an evil-doer and corrupter of the youth, who does not receive the gods whom the State receives, but introduces new divinities." He denies that he is a student of natural science. He neither pretends to know nor to teach it; although he has been satirized as a natural philosopher. Nor is there any more foundation for the report that he is a Sophist. He would have been "very proud and conceited" if he had possessed knowledge enough to charge five minæ for a course of instruction, as Evenus

[1] *Meno*, 95 A; Xen., *Apol.* 29 *sq.*

[2] See the analyses of the *Apology* in Jowett, Campbell's art. "Plato," *Ency. Brit.* xix. 198, and Riddell's edn. of *Apol.*

[3] *Apol.* 18.

does; but he has no knowledge such as Sophists dispense, nor has he ever received money for teaching. He does not, however, wish people to believe that this trouble has simply sprung out of the ground. It has arisen because of the unpopularity that he has incurred through obedience to the call he conceives himself to have received through the oracle at Delphi when consulted by his friend Chærephon. To fathom its mystery he embarked on what has proved a lifelong quest of knowledge, which pursuit has led him to examine the claims of all sorts and conditions of men to its possession, with the result of discovering that they had not even clear conceptions as to their own pursuits. It is because of this that so much enmity has been aroused against him.[1] The very fact that his conversations are attractive to numbers of well-to-do young men who imitate his methods of argument, is turned to his harm; for, in resentment at an examination which reveals their ignorance, many people rake up against him and his followers the "stock charges against all philosophers." "What I have told you, Athenians, is the truth; I neither conceal, nor do I suppress anything, small or great. And yet I know that it is just this plainness of speech which makes me enemies."[2]

When he turns to the actual indictment, it is difficult to grasp the force of what is advanced. If he is the only corrupter of youth and all others are engaged in improving them, it is strange, for in any other art skill is the only means of improvement, and skill is the possession of the few and not of the many. And is

[1] *Apol.* 23 A: "I have made many enemies of a fierce and bitter kind."
[2] *Ib.* 24 A (Church).

it likely that a man would be so foolish as to knowingly "make any of his companions a rogue," when "he will probably injure" the corrupter "in some way"? Self-interest forbids. If he is doing men unintentional harm, then his case is one for private remonstrance.

He then turns to the charge of bringing in new "divine things," and makes Meletus contradict himself by accusing him of atheism. As a matter of fact, he shows that for a long time the heretical opinions of Anaxagoras, with which his accuser seems to confuse the ideas denounced, have been accessible to everybody in books and plays. They are not the views of Socrates, and it is a poor compliment to the judges not to suppose that they knew that. If a man believes in "divine things," new or old, he must believe in divinities. The indictment accuses him of what is, at anyrate, inconsistent with the atheism the accuser urges. It cannot be said that these arguments are very conclusive. Part of the answer rests on the doctrine of the impossibility of willing wrong; part on taking advantage of the confusion in the mind of Meletus between the State gods and divine beings universally. He treats Meletus and his charges, in fact, with a certain contempt: "But in truth, Athenians, I do not think that I need say very much to prove that I have not committed the crime for which Meletus is prosecuting me. What I have said is enough to prove that."[1]

The real difficulty is the invincible prejudice against him, to which he returns: "But, I repeat, it is certainly true, as I have already told you, that I have incurred much unpopularity and made many enemies. And

[1] *Apol.* 28 A (Church).

that is what will cause my condemnation, if I am condemned." But if it is asked, "Why, then, does he persist in a course so certain to end fatally?" he can only answer that he must stick to his God-assigned post. "My friend, if you think that a man of any worth at all ought to reckon the chances of life and death when he acts, or that he ought to think of anything but whether he is acting rightly or wrongly, and as a good or a bad man would act, you are grievously mistaken."[1] "Wherever a man's post is, whether he has chosen it of his own will or whether he has been placed at it by his commander, there it is his duty to remain and face the danger without thinking of death or of any other thing except dishonour."[2] When he was a soldier at Potidæa, Amphipolis, and Delium, he stuck to the post where his officers had placed him; nor will he be less faithful to the command of God. To fear death is to pretend "to know what we do not know." For "it may be the greatest good that can happen" to men. For himself he claims no knowledge, but he is quite sure that disobedience to duty is base. So if offered quittance on the condition of ceasing from his mission, his answer would be Bunyan's: "If you let me out to-day, I will preach again to-morrow." He said: "Athenians, I hold you in the highest regard and love; but I will obey God rather than you: and as long as I have breath and strength I will not cease from philosophy and from exhorting you, and declaring the truth to every one of you whom I meet, saying, as I am wont, 'My excellent friend, you are a citizen of Athens, a city which is very great, and very famous for wisdom and power of mind; are you not ashamed of caring so

[1] *Apol.* 28 B (Church). [2] *Ib.* 28 D.

much for the making of money, and for reputation and for honour? Will you not think or care about wisdom, and truth, and the perfection of your soul?'"[1] He considers that his mission is a providential service to Athens. His task is to witness constantly to the city that every good thing which men have comes from virtue, and he will not alter his way of life, "no, not if he has to die for it many times."

The only way in which he will appeal to them is to assure them that if they put him to death, they will be the losers, not he. "Meletus and Anytus can do me no harm; that is impossible: for I am sure that God will not allow a good man to be injured by a bad one." But they may be sure if they reject him that they are rejecting one who was sent to them by something more than "a mere human impulse," for his course of life has involved sacrifices which evince at least his sincerity.

His course lies open to the objection that he has never been a participant in the public life of Athens, and he proceeds to argue that to have followed this line would have been to bring his special mission to a speedy end. Any conscientious man who "comes forward in public and advises the State" will find himself in some juncture at war with the multitude, and he cannot expect to "save his life" if he "honestly strives against the many lawless and unrighteous deeds" which are done in the State. He himself has proved it to be so. He resisted the unjust demands of the people as to the trial of the generals after Arginusæ; he equally resisted the power of the Thirty in the affair of Leon of Salamis; in both cases at the

[1] *Apol.* 29 D, E (Church). Cf. Acts iv. 19, 20.

risk of life, And it is not to be conceived that he could have lived to continue his philosophic mission so many years if he had taken up politics.

Returning to the question of the influence of his teaching over the young, he denies that he ever had any regular school. Anyone could hear him who chose. No one paid; and there was no secret teaching. Nor is he afraid of an appeal to any man who knows the facts. Many of the relatives of his young friends he can see in court, and some he mentions by name; but none, he is sure, will support the indictment on this head.

Such is his defence; nor does he intend to resort to the customary unmanly pleadings and exhibitions of defendants. Self-respect and plain justice forbid; for the judge's business is "not to make a present of justice, but to give judgment." To overcome by pleading the jurors' oaths to do strict justice, would be teaching them unbelief towards the gods, and would simply convict himself "of the charge of not believing in them." "But," he adds, "that is not so,—far otherwise. For I do believe that there are gods, and in a sense higher than that in which any of my accusers believe in them; and to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best for you and me."

At this point the votes of the judges were taken; and being given for condemnation by a majority of sixty-one, the accuser made a second speech, advocating the penalty named;[1] then the accused was permitted to reply, and to suggest an alternative penalty.

Socrates had expected condemnation, and was not

[1] See procedure in Riddell's *Apol.*, Introd. p. vi.

perturbed. If he is to suggest an alternative to the punishment, he feels that, as one who has spent his life in the service of the city, he can do no less than propose that he should be maintained in the Prytaneum as one who has deserved better of the State than an Olympic winner. He did not intend to defy them in refusing to make entreaties. He is simply as determined not to wrong himself as he is sure that he has not willingly wronged others. He objects to propose either imprisonment, fine, or exile as an alternative penalty; but in compliance with custom proposes a fine of a mina, which he increases, at the suggestion of his friends, to thirty minæ.

After the second vote is taken, and he is condemned to death by judges scandalised and irritated by his confidence and fearlessness, he is permitted to speak the last words of his defence.

His accusers have only anticipated nature by a short time; and not on the merits of the case, but because he disdained to use unworthy arts, they have condemned him. But "he would rather die having spoken after his manner, than speak in their manner and live." Every way of escape is not allowable. He is condemned by his judges, and his judges are condemned by the truth. Let them not think that they will escape both censure and reform by putting the unwelcome censor away. Others will carry on the work, and they should remember that the way to escape censure is to be different men.

Before he is removed to jail he wishes to say something to those who voted for his acquittal. It is that in all the day's proceedings there has been no check or hindrance from the divine sign; a circumstance from

which he augurs that all is well, and that death itself is a good. Reason comes to the aid of this conclusion; for if death is a dreamless sleep, it will be an "unspeakable gain." If it is a removal to another place, where the great of the past now dwell, the just judges and the poets and the heroes, then "if this be true," he says, "let me die again and again." He will meet the wise, and hold converse with them in a world where "they do not put a man to death for asking questions." He says, "I am not angry with my condemners or with my accusers; they have done me no harm, although they did not mean to do me any good, and for this I may gently blame them."

There is one service still that the Athenians can do him: it is to punish, trouble, and reprove his sons "if they seem to care about riches or anything more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing."

"The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die and you to live. Which is better, God only knows."

One question of great interest, we may hope, is settled, if we may take the language of this *Apology* with reference to the enemies of Socrates as deciding his attitude towards the question of personal wrong. On the general question of how far outside the limits of Greek Ethics he was prepared to travel in dealing with the position of the good citizen towards barbarians and enemies,[1]—as to the first he says little: the interest of his speculations was in a new moral basis for the individual man and State, and not in the conception of new political combinations, passing be-

[1] Cf. Zeller, *Socrates*, p. 170; Piat, *Socrate*, p. 179 *sq.*

yond national limits, which many years later had not entered the mind of even Aristotle,[1] who confined his anticipations to a possible Hellenic union: as to public hostilities, he stands on the ordinary ground, and asserts that in war justice does not forbid harm of many kinds to enemies.[2] But here there is light cast on the question of personal wrong. Between Plato and Xenophon there is, indeed, flat contradiction. The soldier represents his master as accepting the doctrine, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy";[3] but the philosopher represents him in the *Gorgias*[4] as teaching that it is doing injustice, and not suffering it, that is the greatest of evils; in the *Apology* as saying, "I am not angry with my condemners";[5] and in the *Crito*,[6] as showing that in no circumstances will the just man do any harm to another, even to avenge wrong done to himself. This is one of the cases in which it is permissible to hope that time brought enlargement,[7] and that in the words of the *Crito* and *Apology* the far-sighted Plato has given us the true picture of the mind of his master.

"I am not angry with my condemners or with my accusers." Socrates forgave the Athenians; and it is certain that they badly needed forgiveness. The craving to revise the verdicts of history has caused various representations of this event which palliate or wholly excuse their conduct; but it does not lend itself easily to such treatment. Benn says, "Those who attempt to remove this stain from the character of the

[1] *Polit.* VII. vii. 1327*b*, 33.
[2] *Mem.* IV. ii. 15.
[3] *Ib.* II. iii. 14; II. vi. 35.
[4] *Gorg.* 469 B.
[5] *Apol.* 41.
[6] *Crito*, 49.
[7] Cf. Plat, 181.

Athenian people will find that, like the bloodstain on Bluebeard's key, when it is rubbed out on one side it reappears on the other." It "reveals a depth of hatred for pure reason in vulgar minds which might otherwise have remained unsuspected."[1] It was a battle between reason and reaction at bottom, and reaction was able for the moment to triumph.

They had not proved their case. Socrates could not be shown to be irreligious. He complied with common observances whatever speculative opinions he held. No attempt is reported to us, in any chance allusion, of the accuser seriously trying to show how Socrates could be said to be starting a new religion. His sign emanated from the Divinity, through whom the Delphic oracle had come that determined his life-work. Nor, although his answer deals only lightly with the charge, could they be said to have made out their case of his bad influence on the young. Many a prominent Athenian had had sons unlike himself. Were men to carry the sins of their children? On the same principle, it has been remarked,[2] if Socrates was blameworthy for the conduct of Critias and Alcibiades, we should have to blame Seneca for Nero and Jesus Christ for Judas.

The thought in those who defend[3] or palliate[4] the condemnation is really the clear statement to themselves of what was present as an instinct or blind conviction in the minds of the Athenian jurors that Socrates' methods were generally unsettling to the fabric of the State. He stood for reason and private judgment, and the State rested on authority. The

[1] *Gk. Phil.* i. 167.
[2] Lasaulx.
[3] Forchhammer, *op. cit.*
[4] Grote.

view is that a Greek State was a kind of closed system in which reason must not be allowed play.[1] Socrates was in possession of a weapon in his use of reasoning which was dangerous whether used in attack or defence. The free play of mind was the objectionable thing. To-day it might be used to establish on a new basis something formerly received on authority; to-morrow, to destroy it from the foundations. And if a Greek State had been at that time in the position depicted of being a sort of church with a tightly bound creed, there might, from the standpoint of self-defence, be something to be said for the action of Athens. But, as a matter of fact, the Greek mind was never thus universally bound in swathings of creed. Athens, indeed, had shown itself particularly unfavourable to heterodoxy; but men with more manifestly heretical ideas[2] than Socrates ever propounded had lived peacefully in Greek States; and in Athens itself for many a year there had been a freedom of comment and opinion permitted on such questions quite inconsistent with this sudden access of orthodoxy. This is the mistake which runs through the presentation of this case. In an access of orthodox zeal, sincere men of conservative mind in religion and government can be easily conceived feeling themselves obliged to take action against a dangerous innovator whose criticism was eating into the fabric of the nation's polity and religion. But the supposition of such a case—the hitherto practically unaffected solidity of State institutions and worship—cannot stand. Such a conception of uniformity was certainly not embodied in the Athens of 399 B.C. There had been disputes of

[1] Benn, p. 164.

[2] *Ib.* p. 168.

philosophers and fights of politicians long before. But in the flush of successful partisanship a kind of political and religious pharisaism took possession of the Athenian democrats. There was a political revenge to be snatched by condemning Socrates, who, if not a politician, held ideas indistinguishable by the Athenian philistine from oligarchy, and at the same time a blow to be struck at innovation; as if, apart from Socrates, the tower of the city's religious and political life stood foursquare to all the winds that blew. The facts were not as it pleased them to assume. The Judæan parallel, if one may reverently suggest it, is not indeed so remote as it at first appears. There, too, there was the party of established order, whom it pleased to ignore the facts of the religious life of the nation, in its contemporary differences, its past battles of prophetism against priestism, its warring sects and speculative disagreements. The "sap and spirit of religion" had gone, yet the form was jealous of innovation. And against Christ, who plucked out the heart of the mystery of Judaism and saved of it all that was worth saving, who proclaimed a spiritual faith, and manifested and imparted the life of God, the whole passion of reaction burst forth. There was the appeal to legality: "We have a law"; there was the underlying political motive to preserve the fabric by sacrificing the innovator; and to anyone who looked either at the past or present of the nation, the same hollowness in the assumption. To return to Greece: if ever, Zeller[1] shows, the Athenians had had the moral right to deal drastically with an innovator like Socrates, it had been long since lost. Many, like

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 231.

Anytus[1] himself, certainly were absolutely sincere, but the city, and doubtless the judges' court, held many who could enjoy the irreverent jests of Aristophanes, who knew that the old order of things in its integrity had passed away, and whose very lack of moral earnestness made simulated zeal possible. Thus between political partisanship, jealousy of reason, and personal prejudice, a current too strong for effectual resistance set in against Socrates, and he was carried away.

Owing to an Athenian custom which forbade public executions during the voyage of the sacred vessel which, with laurel-crowned stern, proceeded every year to Delos in memory of the deliverance wrought by Theseus, Socrates was confined in prison for a month before his death. During the time propositions were made to him that he should avail himself of the means of escape which his friends were ready to supply;[2] but he declined their proposals, as he would commit no breach of the law. He was permitted to see his friends, and continued to occupy himself in intercourse with them and poetical composition until the time of his death.

All the world knows the description of that scene. Early in the morning of the day of his death, his friends Crito, Phædo, Cebes and others arrive at the prison, where, just released from his fetters, Socrates is sitting with Xanthippe. With a certain coldness his wife is dismissed, "weeping bitterly and beating her breast." Plato represents the intervening hours until sunset as occupied with the discussion[3] on immortality already dealt with, which Socrates regards

[1] Murray, *Ancient Greek Literature*, pp. 176, 177.

[2] *Crito.*

[3] See remarks, p. 232.

as his "swan-song." As the discourse comes to an end, the day is creeping on to evening; and as the hemlock must be drunk by sunset, Socrates gives his last directions: Let his friends take care of themselves and walk by the prescribed rule. They can bury him in any way that they like; but they must first get hold of him, and take care that he does not run away from them. Then he retires to bathe.

"When he had taken the bath his children were brought to him (he had two young sons and an elder one); and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito; then he dismissed them and returned to us.

"Now the hour of sunset was near, for a good deal of time had passed while he was within. When he came out, he sat down with us again after his bath, but not much was said. Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, entered and stood by him, saying: 'To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison—indeed, I am sure that you will not be angry with me, for others, as you are aware, and not I, are to blame. And so, fare you well, and try to bear lightly what must needs be—you know my errand.' Then, bursting into tears, he turned away and went out.

"Socrates looked at him and said: 'I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid.' Then, turning to us, he said, 'How charming the man is: since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see

me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good to me as could be; and now see how generously he sorrows on my account. We must do as he says, Crito, and therefore let the cup be brought if the poison is prepared; if not, let the attendant prepare some.'" . . .

The jailer brings the poison and gives Socrates directions: "At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who, in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, Echecrates, as his manner was, took the cup and said, 'What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I or not?' The man answered: 'We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough.' 'I understand,' he said, 'but I may and must ask the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world—even so—and so be it according to my prayer.' Then raising the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully, he drank off the poison. And, hitherto, most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now, when we saw him drinking, and saw, too, that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept, not for him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having to part from such a friend. Nor was I the first; for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up, and I followed; and at that moment Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud and passionate cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: 'What is this strange outcry?' he said. 'I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not misbehave in this

way, for I have been told that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience.' When we heard his words we were ashamed, and refrained our tears. . . . His last words were: 'Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?' 'The debt shall be paid,' said Crito; 'is there anything else?' There was no answer to this question, but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

"Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend; concerning whom I may truly say, that of all the men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best"[1]

[1] *Phædo*, 115 *sq.*

# CHAPTER X

## DEVELOPMENTS AND SUMMARY

THE legacy of Socrates to his age was a spirit rather than a system. Disciples of his founded schools in which certain elements of his teaching were developed. There were Socratic schools; in a strict sense there could hardly be said to be a Socratic school. New emphasis and new interpretations came, and the unity was broken. So much of it centred in the man. He exemplified his own idea of method as none other. No successor bent the bow of Odysseus. He was faithful to his own moral ideal. Elements of weakness in his treatment of individual ethics remained ineffective to harm so long as, in his own person, the practice stood for evidence of the theory. But the unity of the whole was as much in the happy combination of elements in him as in the theoretic harmony of his system, if such it could be called; and at his death each group that deserved the name of a school appeared to have made off with one of the broken pieces. His greatest disciples were the two to whom we owe mainly our knowledge of him, Xenophon and Plato. The first of these has disclosed himself to us in the study of his reports and remarks, and the strictly Socratic element in the second has

also been drawn upon: the immense system of Platonism proper lies without our purview.

But as the outcome of the work of some of his associates, several schools of thought sprang up which ask, in closing our account of Socrates, the briefest notice; Eucleides of Megara had been a disciple, and was reported to have given protection to the friends of Socrates who left Athens after their master's death. He joined the metaphysics of Parmenides to the ethics of Socrates. The really existent was one, and it was identical with the good, knowledge of which was the end of life. He and his followers were fascinated by the refutative method of Socrates, and in their hands it degenerated frequently into the production of logical puzzles and traps depending on undetected fallacies.

The Cynic school was founded by Antisthenes, who has been called "the philosopher of the proletariat." Philosophy was to him less the satisfaction of an intellectual need than a scheme of conduct. His views in logic, derived from the scepticism of Gorgias, only permitted of the validity of identical judgments, and made all scientific movement impossible. In ethics, he held to his master's doctrine of the identity of virtue and knowledge. The virtuous man was self-sufficient, in the sense in which Socrates had explained the self-sufficiency of the gods; they had no wants, neither had he. This independence involved discipline by means of which we were delivered from bondage to artificial wants and got behind all conventions to true nature. The interpretation put by some Cynics upon this theory, which aims to reach virtue through self-control, and to control self by limiting it, led to

disregard of things good as well as evil: "the later Cynics made it a point to disregard all decency and social conventions" (Wallace). But these men represented the parody of the better elements in the school. Antisthenes himself, though preaching and practising a naturalistic morality, fell short of the gross extravagances of some of his followers. In religion he contradicted Greek polytheism, affirming with greater clearness than his master the unity of God, the valuelessness of religious rites, virtue being the only acceptable worship, and an anticipation of human brotherhood in the conception of membership in a universal society of the virtuous. The school of Antisthenes owed much of its celebrity to his eccentric disciple Diogenes, and to the perpetuation in an ennobled fashion of its better elements in Stoicism.

Aristippus of Cyrene, with interests as entirely ethical as those of Antisthenes, held an opposite ideal of life. Socrates had taught that for man the only happiness was virtue. It was natural and right to seek happiness, but it would not be found save along this path. Aristippus seized on the element of eudæmonism in the teaching, and said pleasure was the end of life; and developed his view with clearness and consistency. Holding a sensational doctrine of knowledge which limited certainty to the experience of the moment, pleasure, interpreted as "the sensation of gentle motion," became the "chief good." No qualitative difference can be considered. Pleasures of all sorts are good, in so far as they are pleasures. It is all a question of how we may get the greatest amount. Life is a sum set in the addition of pleasures. Reason shows a man how to set to work. An element of

calculation introduced into the mind by philosophy[1] will show how to select among competing attractions those that offer the best bargains in being followed by least of a reaction in the way of suffering.

It may be conceded that the conception of a man's adjustment to life was, in the theory of Aristippus, closer to Socrates than the Cynicism it opposed. His idea of self-mastery was not mutilation in the sense of absolute renouncement, but use. The Cynic sought to eliminate or starve desire; but the life so ruled was in danger of being a barren heritage. The Cyrenaic believed in gratifying desire within limits ruled by a quantitative measure of happiness. This could be so presented as to wear the appearance of the Socratic "using the world as not abusing it"; yet it lay open to the most sweeping deductions from the first principle of making the single, momentary pleasure the end; and, in practice, proved defenceless against egoistic and degenerate interpretations. It passed into Epicureanism.

All these were partial and seriously defective interpretations of fragments of Socratic theory. The one man who "plucked out the heart of its mystery" and made what it yielded him the starting-point of a philosophy worthy to succeed it was Plato. In him the conceptions of Socrates became pre-existent ideas, the archetypes in the mind of God, and in the ideal world of whose unity they are members, of all existing things. These the soul has seen in its prior existence, and of them it becomes reminiscent, through the disci-

[1] The view is quite modern. Cf. Pater, *The Renaissance*, p. 252. "For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time," etc.

pline, initiated by Socrates, of the dialectic method. The supreme idea is goodness, indistinguishable from God, whom the soul, wrought into harmony by justice, may know and be conformed to. Socrates has not left us a line; but the reverence and love of his disciple is not content to preserve him in his pages, but would fain give him the glory not only of the germinal thought but of the expanded system, by making him the mouthpiece of his deepest teaching. In Plato the movement begun by Socrates passed into philosophy with a power that through the homely records of Xenophon it could never have possessed. Untransformed, it knew in the partial representations of the "Imperfect Socratics" only mutilation. It really died with its beginner, to live anew in that system about which Saint Augustine wrote: "Plato made me know the true God. Jesus Christ showed me the way to Him."

The purpose of the life of Socrates can never be justly treated by limiting examination to the thinker or inquirer. His lifelong aim was to implant a new soul in Athens. The philosopher in him was the servant of the moral reformer. An illumined mind and a changed life, and the second through the first—this was his dream for the men of his day. Character must be built on knowledge. The Greek people "did not know, they did not consider." In a wisdom abstractly conceived, as the Hebrew conception was personal, but with kindred moral power in it, lay, he believed, the salvation of his countrymen. There were many men in Athens, no doubt, concerned about faith and morals, in a time when elements of degeneracy were present and threatening increase. But they had not got to the importance of the moral unit. They believed there

could be a revival of earnestness and integrity, reverence and purity, on the old lines of a literal acceptance of the existing fabric of faith and government. They were anxious not so much in the first place to save the individual Athenian from himself and his evils, as to preserve a fabric which they regarded as safeguarding all within its walls. Socrates had reached a point far beyond all that. His constant anxiety is first about men and last about men. He was fighting as the prophets fought, though in strangely different guise, for a State composed of citizens morally reformed, enlightened, and disciplined; a State whose institutions should be established according to right reason, and continually subject to its review. He had parted essentially with faith in forms, and was operating on the spirit. He longed to win men to a view-point like his own in the talk with Hippias or in the *Crito*, where the law without had become by reflection and free choice the inner law, and was obeyed not because of some mysterious origin, or under the claim of mere authority, but because men saw its reasonableness and necessity, and so adopted it for themselves;[1] because they saw that this was the point where the divine and human standards touched.

The question of the seat of authority has lasted through the ages, and the Socratic transference of it to the reflective reason, of which his very discussions on piety and justice were the claim, demanded an insight and a moral earnestness too great for the mass of his fellows. The trend of progress of the human mind was with him. But he was inviting his countrymen to tread a lonely path, which many of them

[1] Cf. Zeller, p. 227.

doubtless were shrewd enough to see, might lead them, as it led him, to the Court of the Heliæa and the condemned cell in the interests of that higher law which they alone might see. This was one reason of the failure of his work. The attitude he wanted men to take was a Protestant attitude, the attitude of a dissenter from the blind acceptance of conventions in faith and morality, or from that still worse spirit that evaded obligation through a flippant scepticism or moral indifference. And he found comparatively few prepared to run the material risks.

It is foolish to criticise men for the lack of what they could not have, and it is no condemnation of Socrates that the problem of individual renewal, which was the problem of Israel too, was not solved on any great scale in Athens four hundred years before Christ. But it is, perhaps, legitimate to emphasize the ignoring in Socrates of those elements in human nature to which spiritual forces make their appeal, and which they summon as their allies—the feelings and the will. The ordinary man will never be reasoned into the kingdom of God. Neither in Jerusalem nor Athens does the average man conceal an untrained philosopher. And it was not to the average man that Socrates made his appeal. It was to men like Aristodemus and Euthydemus. It was to incipient thinkers; it was to men who had shed much of their ancestral faith; who had experienced in some degree what educated Brahmins are experiencing to-day. These men he could often prevent from slipping into unfaith, and lead them on to spirituality of interpretation. If such men would follow him along the track of right reason, he believed he could lead them to a spot where a purer creed grew.

But to the common heart, to the mind incapable of dialectical training, there was no appeal. Feeling must be enlisted in the spiritual warfare, and his appeal to it in the idealisation of friendship between disciples falls faint beside the appeal that seeks love as the fulfilling of the law; and that, not love to the bare and abstract ideal, but to the man in whom it breathes.

Virtue wanted nothing, Antisthenes said, but the "strength of Socrates." And that virtue was no flawless ideal, but such as many could hope to realise. It was here that the impotence of ideals to work manifested itself. The Socratic ideal is limited in its range of appeal; it has the narrowness of a system intellectual and æsthetic in its root conceptions, rather than moral; and it lacks strength to win fulfilment. If expansion in the realm of ideas is a real experience, so increase in the volume of spiritual force is a real experience to the world and to the individual. This was the Athenian problem; it was the Jewish problem; it is the universal problem. And it involves no diminution of the world's indebtedness to the sages of heathendom to believe that the victorious answer is in Him who gives to men power to become sons of God.

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